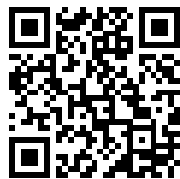


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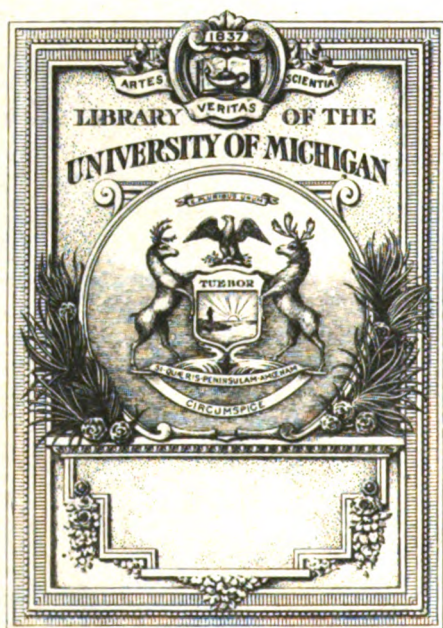
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**THE BRITISH NAVY  
IN ADVERSITY**



# THE BRITISH NAVY IN ADVERSITY

A STUDY OF THE WAR OF  
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

By  
CAPTAIN W. M. JAMES, C.B., R.N.

*WITH MAPS AND DIAGRAMS*

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## PREFACE

THE War of American Independence, like its predecessor the Seven Years War, began with a quarrel of minor importance on the Eastern shore of North America, and gradually increased in intensity until all the principal European countries were involved in hostilities and the clash of arms was resounding in nearly every quarter of the globe.

As a national struggle it was distinguished by some special characteristics. It was in all its main features a maritime war. In its earlier stages success depended upon the conveyance of troops across the Atlantic, and in its later upon the issue of the fight between Great Britain and the triple forces of France, Spain, and Holland for the control of the sea on the American coastline and for access to the West Indies and the Indian Ocean.

Again, the crisis discovered all the fruits of the genius of the Duc de Choiseul in the reconstruction of the navy of France. In the French dockyards ships had been built with feverish activity. Their arsenals were filled; their supplies of ships' timber were ample. Choiseul's reforms had touched every branch of naval administration. He had breathed a new spirit into the personnel of the service.

In this remodelled navy of France, England had to meet a very formidable antagonist, and she had to meet him, moreover, in a disastrous hour when mediocrity and incapacity prevailed in the councils of State, and when the work of Admiralty had fallen utterly behind.

This contest became a grave menace to England's existence as a great power. In due course French, Spanish, and Dutch fleets were combined in opposition to her naval supremacy, and the

Armed Neutrality of the Baltic aggravated the issue. The story of the Armada of the sixteenth century is familiar, but the story of the insolent threat to the British flag when the French and Spanish fleet sailed unchallenged up channel in 1779 fills a comparatively obscure page in English history. Never were these shores in greater peril from an invader. Fortunately, no leader appeared among the allies possessing the rare talent of command or the inspired gift of naval daring who was capable of turning the situation to the decisive advantage of their arms.

The main purpose of this work is to describe and comment upon the naval operations of this war, and at the same time offer some account of the military exertions expended on the mainland. It is only by a correct determination of the relation of the naval to the military effort that a true conspectus can be given of a war which was fraught with such vital consequences to the fortunes of Great Britain. With this object in view the space that has been devoted to the military operations in North America may appear excessive, but throughout the war the movements of the British armies and fleets were entirely dependent one on the other and so the fortunes of the military commanders must be dealt with in some detail.

Special attention has been paid to the peace-time training of the rival navies. Actual numbers of ships and men are too often taken as a criterion of relative strength. These numbers are of slight importance if the ships are not seaworthy and well-equipped, the lower-deck personnel efficient, and the officers, both senior and junior, masters of their profession.

In a sense this war is a classic. It is, perhaps, the best example in our history of the folly of allowing sea forces to decay because the political horizon for the moment seems clear. It is the leading case in naval history of the futility of attempting operations in distant waters without harbours available for shelter and repairs. It also points to the inevitable disasters which follow the teaching of a false tactical doctrine.

In this narrative of the War of American Independence it will be necessary to refer to the political history of the time and to the causes which determined the purpose and dictated the

policy of responsible Ministers of the Crown in the latter years of the eighteenth century. These references will find their appropriate place as the story of the struggle by land and sea is gradually unfolded. But it is not part of the design of this volume to applaud or decry the conduct of the statesmen or the consequences of their action in the disputed field of political controversy.

Detailed lists of ships and senior officers who took part in the principal actions have been omitted from the body of the book and printed as appendices, as they only interest the few. This course has the additional advantage that the reader's attention is not diverted from the inception, conduct, and result of operations by a large number of names and figures. The counting of ships and guns is a fascinating pursuit, but we need look no further back than the Battle of Tsushima to see what pitfalls await the statistician. During the passage of the Russian fleet to the East writers in all countries supplied their readers with tables showing the relative tonnage, gun power, speed and armour of the rival fleets. They forecasted a magnificent struggle when the two fleets of nearly equal strength met in mortal combat. But when the time came on that grey day in the Tsushima Strait there was no struggle ; instead there was slaughter. The number of tons of projectiles the Russians could throw at their enemy per minute, the number of knots they could steam at this or that horse-power, the number of inches of armour here and there, counted for little when pitted against a well-trained and war-tried personnel fighting under a skilled and determined leader.

The number of ships of the line that sailed with the Flag for major operations is given in the text, but the smaller ships, mounting fifty guns, were not always included in the line as their function in battle was a matter on which the opinion of the flag officers of the day differed.

In writing the narrative, I have relied on the original Despatches and Admiralty Letters which are preserved in the Public Record Office, the two French Naval Histories by Lacour-Gayet and Chevalier, and the publications of the Navy Records Society



and the Historical Manuscripts Commission ; also on Beatson's ' Naval and Military Memoirs ' for certain details not to be found elsewhere.

My work has been greatly facilitated by the assistance rendered me by Captain E. W. Denison, R.N. (retired), and Mr. J. G. Bullocke, and I am under special obligation to Professor Geoffrey Callender who read through and commented on the MS.

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# THE BRITISH NAVY IN ADVERSITY

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

IN the magnificent drama called history there are for the British people no scenes which so stir the imagination, quicken the pulse, and engender pride of race, as those which deal with the period when British sea forces dominated the ways of men and affairs in Europe and America.

The power to control the tradeways and sea communications of the world was felt by our enemies in the earlier wars of the eighteenth century in no small degree, and reached its maximum strength during the Seven Years War when England was fortunate in possessing men who knew how to use a trustworthy weapon.

Lesser men than Pitt might well have failed to realise the potentiality of a fleet led by Hawke, Boscawen, and Saunders. Men of lesser courage might have quailed before the storm of protest that followed the complete failure of the earlier attempts at amphibious warfare. Pitt kept his eyes steadily fixed on his object, deferring at times to advice from the trusted Anson, and became the great and inspired figure in a dramatic period. British sea power then waned, and did not again reach maximum strength until the fame and victories of Napoleon brought out all that was best in the people whose destruction he so often contemplated.

It is far pleasanter to study those scenes in the drama which

B

portray successful operations and world-resounding victories than those which deal with the dark days of bad leadership and faulty direction at headquarters. We like to read of Hawke at Quiberon, Boscawen off Lagos, Howe, Jervis, and all that long line of illustrious admirals reaching up to Horatio Nelson. But it is distasteful to read of the failures, the lost opportunities, and the weakness of direction during the War of American Independence. Perhaps we forget that Arbuthnot, Graves, and Byron might now stand side by side with the great ones in the Temple of Fame if they had taken the chances that were offered them.

— The War of American Independence well deserves special study. The naval student will see in it the beginning of a truly maritime war, such a war as in its later phases evokes memories of de Ruyter and Tourville. In its aspect as a maritime war it exhibits none of the conditions of those conflicts which required the English Minister to balance at frequent intervals the naval and military necessities of his country with those of her exacting allies. Again, the war was waged on a battlefield whose boundaries were the extended limits of the British Empire. At one time the theatre of hostilities is in the East Indies, at another in the West. The struggle sways from the coast of America to the shores of England, from Chesapeake Bay to Gibraltar, to the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon.

The popular test of interest in a war is the decisive engagement which is written large by the historian. It may be laid down as a general rule that one sea battle determines the issue between contending navies: and thereafter its name glows in the pages of history. Thus, the Seven Years War gives the capital victory of Hawke, the French Revolutionary War the victories of Howe and Jervis, and the Napoleonic War the crowning achievement of Nelson. Tried by these tests the War of American Independence presents us with the Battle of The Saints.

And yet this is neither the true nor the scientific method of appraising the value and interest of a naval campaign.

War in its final stages is pressure on the enemy people, and not merely a succession of combats between armed forces at sea

and on land. To the army it falls to effect that pressure by force of arms, usually in pitched battle, but often the lot of the sister service is to be content with the dull and dreary business of blockade under conditions of danger unknown to the lay critic of events. Much might be written on this subject, but it will be sufficient here to point out that land forces must stand and fight or give up territory ; to point out that they can manœuvre an opposing force into such a position that it cannot retreat ; and to point out that they may possess a superior mobility that will enable them to overhaul their enemy in retreat and compel battle or surrender.

The sea forces are faced with an entirely different problem. The enemy fleet lying in a defended harbour cannot be forced to put to sea by direct naval action. The fleet refusing action does not surrender vital territory, though the after-effects may be considerable. Again, the mobility of rival fleets has rarely, if ever, differed by such a margin as to permit of action being forced on an unwilling enemy. In the sailing era a shift of wind sometimes enabled an admiral to force action on his opponent and, during the War of American Independence, ships that were coppered possessed a superiority in speed over those which were not. But the rival fleets had to be in close contact before this advantage became apparent.

Broadly speaking, sea battles of the first magnitude have been fought because each of the commanders thought himself the superior of his rival in some respect, either his own skill, the morale of those he commanded, or his superiority in guns or ships. Lord St. Vincent expressed his views on the subject strongly. ' I have often told you that two fleets of equal force can never produce decisive events unless they are equally determined to fight it out or the Commander-in-Chief of one of them bitches it so as to misconduct his line.' <sup>1</sup> So while the grand clash of arms may provide a dramatic climax in war, and a glittering victory may form the brightest star in a constellation of events around which minor luminaries may be seen acting and re-acting, yet it is these lesser movements in their operations which enable us to form a correct

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood* (N.R.S., vol. iii.).



judgment of maritime effort. Judged by the variety of minor events, the War of American Independence compares favourably with other wars of the eighteenth century. Indeed, the many tragic failures of the naval and military commanders are, in the importance of their results, as well worth examination and study as any of the minor operations of the Seven Years War or the Napoleonic War which are better known because they generally resulted in victory to our arms.

Again, if the interest of a campaign lies in any degree in its exposition of amphibious warfare—that is to say, the carrying hither and thither of land forces under the protection of sea forces and landing them under cover of ships' guns—then the War of American Independence is deserving of special notice, for the army throughout depended entirely on the navy for the means of executing its projects.

There is also the interest in the men—the big men, the older men, the younger men—which is common to the study of all campaigns. It is the romantic side of history which appeals to the reading majority. The lessons to be gleaned from the mistakes or successes of the old-time leaders, details of fighting equipment, and discussion in the lecture-room on the strategy and tactics employed, interest for the most part only professional men. But what manner of men the leaders were, how they made their way up to high rank, what they themselves thought of men and affairs, will always excite the curiosity and stir the interest of their countrymen. The War of American Independence is as rich in these respects as the Seven Years War or the wars that followed, either in great men who executed great projects, in lesser men who did their part well, or in youngsters who earned their spurs.

The *beau sabreur* of one war reappears as the wise and able leader of the next war. Hawke of the *Berwick* at Matthews' action in the War of the Austrian Succession becomes the leader of imperishable fame in the Seven Years War; Boscawen, the dashing young captain at Puerto Bello in 1789, is found as Hawke's tried and trusted colleague twenty years later; Rodney, the brilliant leader of the Havre expedition, Howe who by personal bravery saved the situation at Le Cas, Samuel Hood—all these

the successful young leaders of the Seven Years War—survive as the great sea commanders of the War of American Independence. Of the young men we find a magnificent gallery. Pellew and Saumarez proved themselves when mere boys at the outset of the campaign in America ; Saumarez later on, as a very young captain, showed striking initiative at the Battle of The Saints ; Nelson and Collingwood distinguished themselves when still in the early twenties. Of men in the minor commands we come across such famous names as William Hotham, Hyde Parker, John Jervis, Peter Parker, Samuel Barrington, Adam Duncan, and Alexander Hood.

It is difficult to appraise justly the deeds of that large body of men who neither led large forces nor performed recorded deeds of individual gallantry which would have enabled them to get a footing on the ladder of fame. They are forgotten. No orders, stars, or crosses for them in those days. Yet there must have been so many whose lives were of honourable and devoted service, who were always fighting the enemy and the elements, and always did what was asked of them, and did it well.

The War of American Independence reveals much in the way of small ship actions, frigate work, and minor operations, in which captains, officers and men distinguished themselves. Pearson of the *Serapis*, Andrew Hamond and Reynolds of river warfare fame, and a host of other very gallant men have a fine record in the years of warfare and their names should not be forgotten. Nor were the American captains, with no previous experience of war and no early naval training, behind them in courage and leadership. The history of the privateers is replete with romance and deeds of daring, but it is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this book to describe in detail the many hard-fought single ship actions.

It is now generally admitted that in regard to the numbers and proportions of naval actions, and the qualities of the naval commanders who were employed, the War of American Independence has claims to scientific study equal if not superior to the wars of an earlier and later date. A very interesting and very important feature distinguishing this war is that after the

intrusion of France and Spain into the conflict the naval strength of the allies was greater, at times much greater, than our own. Before the Peace of Paris was signed, steady and scientific work was being applied to the construction, numbers, and maintenance of the French Navy with the avowed intention of recovering the glory and lustre which had been lost in the Seven Years War. The entry of the Spanish forces on the side of France in the year 1779 added a considerable reinforcement to the powerful fleet of the House of Bourbon.

Under these conditions the British commanders encountered antagonists at once formidable, determined, and of no mean skill. Although events showed a disinclination on the part of the enemy to fight to a finish, and his contentment with the work of disablement, and although, as a rule, the execution of his plans fell short of their conception, nevertheless the French commanders were very different men from their predecessors in the Seven Years War and their successors in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

There are many lessons to be learnt from this war which, for the most part, was fought on the open seas. [Perhaps one of the most important is the advantage which a single nation with unity of aim has over the divided counsels of a coalition.] The greatest care is, however, required in extracting these lessons. Precedent and principle so easily become confused, and the tragic results of disposing ships in a certain way because they were so disposed in an earlier war, or of thinking out operations in the terms of the day before yesterday, are easily seen in the pages of history. The principles remain unchanged. Ships must rest, replenish and refit so long as they go to sea and man is the human being we know him. Concentration of the right force at the right time and place will always be essential to victory. The same human characteristics show themselves in those leaders who are victorious, and the same in those leaders who fail.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DISSIPATION OF A LEGACY

SOME enquiry into the condition of the fleet at the outbreak of hostilities is a necessary preliminary to a study of any phase of maritime war. If we approach our subject with no knowledge of the state of the ships and their armament or the efficiency of the personnel, if we treat these constituents of the sea fighting force solely from a numerical point of view, it is not possible to do justice to the efforts of those who served at sea or those who directed their movements from the Admiralty.

Every war on a large scale leaves a legacy. The stern test of battle reveals weakness in ship construction which can be remedied, weapons unexpectedly prove inadequate for their task, strategical and tactical ideas conceived in peace-time become modified from experience. There is always some definite advance, for not only does war act as a quickening agent to man's imagination in methods of fighting, but it also brings about reforms in administration, which, though often long overdue, are not deemed expedient in the piping times of peace.

The Seven Years War was no exception. For the greater part of that war the sea service had been governed by Lord Anson, a man of great administrative ability, sea experience, and determination. Before he took office, ships of the line with sides pierced for fifty to a hundred guns had been built for many years on a plan fixed by Order-in-Council. This plan had proved inferior to that used by the French, whose ships were faster and better equipped in many respects. Anson revised this faulty system of building, and he was also responsible for the laying down of 74-gun ships in place of 60-gun ships which had previously formed the principal part of the line. During the war previous

ideas as to the requirements of the fleet in the smaller type of vessel were considerably modified, and the regular frigate, built for speed, began to appear in the 'State of the Fleet.' Of this true frigate type the list in 1762 shows twenty-two of the 20-gun type and thirty-two of the 32-gun type, none of which had appeared before as an integral part of the fighting forces. The lack of cruisers had been severely felt during the earlier years of the war, more especially when Hawke was struggling to intercept French squadrons with literally nothing to act as eyes of the fleet.

Though very few ships were lost during the war as a result of enemy action, the number of first-line ships had been frequently reduced by shipwreck. But the dockyards, under the stern eye of Anson, were kept at a high standard, and 165 ships of the line were shown on the list when the Peace of Paris was signed.

It was Anson, too, who was responsible for the first experiments in coppering ships' bottoms. This was a very definite advance in the art of shipbuilding as it resulted in a considerable increase in speed. The experiment commenced with a frigate in 1761, and, though coppering was not universal until about 1784, the number of ships so treated was always on the increase. The value of this system was fully realised by sea officers. In 1779 Captain Young, in the course of a letter to Sir Charles Middleton (afterwards Lord Barham) wrote:—'For God's sake, and our country's, send out copper-bottomed ships to relieve the foul and crippled ones.'<sup>1</sup> Kempenfelt, the most advanced naval thinker of his day, expressed similar views. 'I think I may safely hazard an opinion that twenty-five sail of the line coppered would be sufficient to hazard and tease this great unwieldy armada.'<sup>2</sup>

In the field of strategy the Seven Years War produced a marked change of thought in one important respect. Trade with their rich West Indian possessions was of vital importance to France, Spain, and Great Britain. During the earlier wars of the eighteenth century this cross Atlantic trade proceeded out and home in convoys which were given the greatest protection possible whilst within striking distance of the enemy forces. Anson had

<sup>1</sup> *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.). Sir Charles Middleton was Controller of the Navy, 1778–1790.

<sup>2</sup> *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

different ideas, and Hawke sailed soon after the declaration of war to establish a blockade of the French ports. The system of blockade sometimes failed when the same gale that blew the blockading force off its station enabled the enemy to run in or out of harbour, but the principle of keeping the enemy in port and escorting convoys with only sufficient force to drive off privateers and small cruising vessels was established, and has stood the test of time. Anson's strategy underwent a severe test during the war as the possession of Canada was in dispute. Not only had transports and storeships to be safeguarded during their voyage across the Atlantic, but the enemy's freedom of action had to be curtailed if the concentrations on the American seaboard were to be effective.

The war had not, however, witnessed any great advance in tactical thought, and the War of American Independence began with Fighting Instructions which had received but few additions during the preceding decades. When we consider the calibre of the men who commanded the fleets in action during the Seven Years War—Hawke, Boscawen, Pocock—it may seem remarkable that the period was so barren of new ideas. But it must be remembered that, with the exception of Pocock's actions with D'Aché in the East Indies, the sea battles were all chases, and Hawke and Boscawen had no opportunity of demonstrating their tactical ability. At Quiberon, at Lagos, and at Cartagena the enemy were attacked in retreat, and, fierce as those actions were when the French ships found themselves outsailed, no ordered tactics were used by either side. Byng, off Minorca, attempted something new when he manœuvred his fleet so as to 'lask' or edge down on the enemy's line in order to avoid the tremendous raking that ships received when they presented their bows to the enemy's broadsides; and Hawke, when he relieved Byng after the battle, issued some new instructions with regard to shortening and making sail when approaching the enemy in order that the first clash should take place simultaneously all along the line.

The Navy had been on active service for many years during the wars of the Austrian and Spanish Succession, and it is remarkable that these apparently simple ideas can be described as

new. But rigid rules governed the actions of both land and sea commanders in those days. To attack from to windward, to engage ship to ship, was the be all and end all of naval tactics, despite all the disadvantages that accrued when one portion of the fleet, due to original position or sailing qualities, reached the enemy line before the remainder. We also see an echo of the days of chivalry in the unwritten law that the flagship must be laid alongside the opposing flagship. The results of the courts martial that followed Matthews' action off Toulon in the War of the Austrian Succession were sufficient to kill all originality in the sea commanders for many years after, because those who had obeyed the letter of the law with disastrous results were acquitted, and those who had attempted to obtain victory by following the spirit, and not the letter, were cashiered. The following extract from the report of Byng's court martial is illuminating: 'Q. (Mr. Lawrance, Secretary): "Do you remember the Admiral assigning any reasons for standing past the enemy's rear before tacking on 20th May." A.: "I very well remember, when our van had got the length of the enemy's rear, I saw the Admiral peruse the 17th Article of the Fighting Instructions. I took the liberty of observing that, agreeable to that Article, the fleet should tack. The Admiral answered me that he would stand on rather beyond their rear before he tacked as it would give an opportunity to every ship to lead slanting down on the one she was to engage."'

A curious scene is here depicted, the Admiral reading his manual when almost within gunshot of the enemy, and discussing with his secretary the propriety of departing from the letter of the law.

But if the tactical lessons were few, those that could be gleaned from a study of the oversea expeditions were many and valuable. Amphibious warfare is the prerogative of the nation that controls the sea communications, and Pitt had not been slow to see the immense power for offence that lay in an army that could be transported overseas and landed under cover of ships' guns at any selected point and time. The first expedition against Rochefort had been a failure, due to misunderstanding and antagonism between Hawke and the General, but in those conducted by Rodney and Monckton against Martinique, Keppel and Hodgson

against Belleisle, and that most glorious example of all, Saunders and Wolfe against Quebec, the sea officers of the day had before them classic examples of how to achieve success in the most difficult of all warlike operations.

Perhaps, however, the richest part of the legacy lay in the personnel serving at the end of the war. Though it was felt by many that the treaty that brought hostilities to an end was weak, and gave away much that had been won by hard fighting, yet the noise of the parliamentary battle can hardly have reached the fleet in those days of slow communications and little reading, and both officers and men must have felt pride and satisfaction in the part they had played in attaining victory.

The years from 1755 to 1762 had witnessed an almost uninterrupted series of successes for the sea forces, and at the peace there were on the pay rolls over 49,000 seamen and marines, of whom a great number were war-hardened and experienced men, or, as they were called in those days, 'prime seamen'; not, perhaps, so many as the officers would have wished, for the records give the number of missing and sick for the seven years as 193,708, a figure that must have included a very large number of deserters. The casual attitude towards the men's comfort, the stupid method of payment, and the extraordinarily unfair division of the spoils—Sir George Pocock and the Earl of Albemarle each received £122,000 after the capture of Havana, whilst a bluejacket received £3 14s. 9½d.—were doubtless prominent influences against a contented feeling on the lower deck, though the many stories of the enthusiasm and courage of the bluejackets at Martinique and Quebec show clearly that they forgot their troubles when there was fighting to be done.

The high commands during the war had been held by four men of imperishable fame. Sir Edward Hawke was the senior Flag Officer who had had experience in the handling of big fleets, but his sea service was at an end. His austere figure had dominated events for many years at sea. His grim determination had kept the fleet at sea month after month, fighting the winter gales, when lesser men, with good excuse, would have been sheltering in the Channel ports. If ever a man deserved rest he did. Owing



to personal antagonism and the mean-spiritedness of those in power, he had not yet received adequate reward for his great work. It was many years before the King honoured him with a Peerage, and during four of those years he was First Lord of the Admiralty—an office he can hardly have sought for under the prevailing conditions, and one he must have been glad to quit. That great Cornishman, Edward Boscawen, 'Old Dreadnought,' had died in 1761 at the comparatively young age of fifty, but before he died he had taught men how to make and keep a fleet efficient. There is nothing finer in the history of the Navy than the story of Boscawen's fleet clearing from Gibraltar four hours after the signal 'Enemy in sight' was received, though sails were unbent, upper yards and masts down, and a large number of the personnel on shore. Sir George Pocock, famous for his period of command in the East Indies when he thrice fought D'Aché, and afterwards the man specially selected by Anson for the Havana expedition, was fifty-six years old at the end of the war. Sir Charles Saunders, the hero of Quebec, and a man universally respected as a great seaman, was still only forty-nine years of age.

Service at sea in those days meant great hardship and few comforts, and, after a long war, the older and senior men had earned, and, indeed, nature demanded, rest from their labours. But their proved good judgment and experience could still be of the utmost value at the council board.

Of the younger men who had distinguished themselves in independent commands, and who could therefore be expected to fill the gaps caused by the retirement of their great masters, there was no lack. First and foremost was Richard Howe, whose ship had fired the first shot of the Seven Years War off Newfoundland, and who had been in the forefront of the fighting ever since. Captain of the *Magnanime* in Hawke's fleet in the earlier years, specially selected by Hawke to lead the fleet into the dangerous and little-known waters of Quiberon Bay, famous for his gallantry at Le Cas which saved disaster, he was a captain of sixteen years standing when peace was signed. Senior to him was George Brydges Rodney, a rear-admiral of three years standing at the end of the war. In his organisation and conduct of the expedi-

tion against Havre in 1759, and his work in co-operation with General Monckton which resulted in the capture of Martinique, he had revealed exceptional powers of leadership and a fertile brain. His last act of the war, when he failed to have his ships ready for Pocock's expedition, preferring to seek treasure on the Spanish Main, had not been to his credit; but his conduct on that occasion, even if indefensible, could not detract from his reputation as a fighting leader.

Augustus Keppel, who became a rear-admiral in the peace year, was the captain who carried such a press of sail in order to be well up in the hunt at Quiberon Bay that he nearly lost his ship by flooding, and at a later stage in the war showed the same quality of determination in well-planned amphibious work at Belleisle.

Junior to these three were Kempenfelt, already making his mark; John Jervis of the *Porcupine* at Quebec; Samuel Hood, who had taken part in the Rochefort Expedition, Rodney's exploit against Havre, and several single-ship actions; Hyde Parker, who had distinguished himself in the East Indies under Pocock; Peter Parker, who had taken part in the operations in the West Indies and those under Keppel at Belleisle.

What a magnificent legacy! A fine fleet of big ships, an adequate number of the new frigates or cruisers, a great advantage in the discovery of coppering, dockyards in an efficient state, many experienced veterans on the lower deck, a proved corps of officers, and, above all, a personnel that had experienced victory. Pitt and Anson had indeed built well, but those who followed them were not of the same metal, and the old Admiral had not long been carried to his final resting-place before the squandering of the legacy began.

It is hard to find any excuse. No Limitation of Armaments agreements accompanied the Treaty of Paris. None but the most perverse cranks could have imagined that the pious preamble to the Treaty: 'There shall be a Christian, universal, and perpetual peace' expressed the truth. The hereditary enemy had been brought to terms, but had not experienced a crushing defeat. On the contrary, Ministers could hardly have been so stupid as

to suppose that Choiseul would occupy himself in peaceful pursuits even if their intelligence service failed to tell them of the renaissance that that clever and adroit statesman was bringing about in the French Navy.

Although the country had benefited so greatly from Lord Anson's rule at the Admiralty, the office of First Sea Lord reverted to a civilian in 1762. No doubt such a course was rendered easier, as Anson, during his long term of office, had produced regularity and routine into Admiralty business. George Grenville, Lord Halifax, and the Earl of Egmont held the office between 1762 and 1766, but none of them left his mark in any way. During these years the country was torn by political faction, and corruption permeated the public services and Parliament. It was well for the Navy that for a short, though, alas ! too short a time, the office once more reverted to a great sailor in 1766. It was thanks to Pitt that this occurred. He returned to power as Earl of Chatham in that year, and, no doubt, with memories of the great work done in collaboration with Anson still fresh, determined to have a naval First Lord. His choice fell on Sir Charles Saunders. Hawke and Pocock were both senior to Saunders, and the appointment was naturally a source of great dissatisfaction to them, so much so in the case of Pocock that he retired from the service. And so, for personal and political reasons, the country lost the services of one of its most able men.

A curious reason is attributed for Chatham's selection of Saunders. Saunders and Keppel, who were Junior Lords in the Rockingham administration, were very close friends, and it was intimated to Chatham that both would retire and break up the Board if a senior officer was brought in over their heads. Saunders does not appear in a favourable light at this period of his career. A few months later, when Lord Edgcumbe's services in the Ministry were dispensed with by Chatham, the First Lord and Keppel, who were of the same political faction, took the dismissal as an affront to themselves and resigned. 'Your friend, yellow Saunders, gave up yesterday,' wrote Gilly Williams. 'He gave for the only reason that at his time of life he could not think of living without

the Keppels.’<sup>1</sup> Excuse may be found in the disturbed political atmosphere of the day, and Saunders, like so many naval officers of the period, was a politician as well as a sailor. But it was unfortunate that he permitted his political feelings to gain the upper hand, for the country thereby lost the services of a wise counsellor. For the few months he held office he set a stern face against the jobbery then rampant, and gave a temporary check to the disorganisation of the Navy which had already commenced.

Chatham then turned to Hawke, the last of the old guard available, and, though worn with many years of sea service and no longer a young man, he accepted the post and held it for four years. His views on the strength of the fleet that should be maintained were crystallized in one of his memoranda: ‘Our enemies being peculiarly attentive to their marine, our fleet could only be termed considerable in the proportion it bore to that of the House of Bourbon.’<sup>2</sup> He strove for this object under disheartening conditions, and whilst fourteen big ships were broken up, thirteen were built and completed and fifteen laid down during his reign at the Admiralty. Assisted by his old cruiser captain, Augustus Harvey, he was responsible for an improvement in the half-pay of lieutenants who, being in great poverty, were leaving the service to better themselves as mates in merchant ships and settlers in America. This measure was successful in retaining the services of a certain number of the rapidly disappearing corps of efficient officers.

During his term of office two important events occurred. In 1764 the Corsicans rose in revolt against their Genoese masters, who, tired of the unruly islanders, arranged for their transfer to French rule. Despite the entreaties of Saunders, who realised what the possession of the Island would mean to the French in the event of war, the Government contented themselves with a remonstrance, a clear indication of the weak direction of foreign policy at this time. They did, however, take up a firmer attitude when in 1770 the Spanish Governor of Buenos Ayres seized the Falkland Islands which had been added to Great Britain by the enterprise of

<sup>1</sup> *Selwyn Correspondence*, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Burrows in *Life of Admiral Lord Hawke*.

Captain Byron. A demand to Madrid for the immediate restoration of the islands was acceded to with alacrity, but many wise men saw the hand of France in this high-handed action of her old ally. These incidents should have been the writing on the wall to those responsible for the country's defence.

Though Hawke worked hard to maintain the Navy in an efficient condition he was not strong enough to stop the abuses or obtain the supplies he considered necessary. Before the trouble with Spain arose he demanded an additional 4,000 men, which he failed to get, and when the Spanish war cloud appeared the state of the Navy was severely criticised in the House of Commons by Saunders. Though much that was said in the heat of debate gave an exaggerated picture of the state of the ships and personnel, there was a substratum of truth which must have been a bitter pill to a man of Hawke's character. A large sum of money was added to the naval estimates on this occasion, but of the 'extraordinary naval supply' no account was ever given. Various excuses were made for withholding these accounts, and the corruption so rife in Government departments had clearly tainted Admiralty business. Hawke's health finally broke down under the pressure, and he resigned in 1771. One of his written notes shows the difficulties he laboured under: 'The late peace establishment will not keep up four score ships of the line in perfect repair, especially when it is clipped ten or twelve thousand every year by the Minister of the Extraordinary estimates.'<sup>1</sup>

He was succeeded by Lord Sandwich, and such mischief as existed under the naval First Lords soon became accentuated under a man who was described by a contemporary as:

"Too infamous to have a friend,  
Too bad for bad men to commend."

Between 1771 and 1778 Sandwich received about six million pounds for the Navy, not including the vote for the men, and at the end of it all there was little to show. It was a long story of administrative jobbery and corruption. Large sums of money were appropriated for the repair of ships that were rotting in

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Burrows in *Life of Admiral Lord Hawke*.

harbour and never had a penny spent on them. Estimates were falsified, ships were counted twice in the Weekly Progress Lists, and ships were put into commission to please political supporters when there was no intention of fitting them for active service. It is not possible to arrive at a correct estimate of the number of ships that were at any time fit to fight. All authorities contradict one another for reasons easily understandable. It is always difficult to arrive at the fighting strength of a fleet from a perusal of a Navy List. The list is swollen by the names of ships that are used as hulks and ships which, for one cause or another, are not intended for the firing line. And when, as in the period under review, dockyard reports showed rotten hulks, ships in need of big refits, and new ships far from completion, as part of the fighting strength it is quite impossible to arrive at the correct figures.

But there are certain indisputable facts which show that the Navy, when once more mobilised for active service, had shrunk away from its former glory, and that the fine lists of ships were a mockery. During the opening phases of the War of American Independence a totally inadequate force was employed in North American waters, and reinforcements could not be found: with the result that the three successive admirals, Graves, Shulldham, and Howe, were unable to carry out essential operations. Later on, Keppel, on arriving at Portsmouth to take command of the Channel Fleet, which was to oppose the large French fleet which had put to sea from Brest, found 'only six ships fit to meet a seaman's eye.' He had accepted a command reputed to consist of forty-two ships of the line ready for service, but the majority of the ships required extensive refits and the storehouses were empty.

With a fleet in this condition it is not surprising that the personnel was discontented, inefficient, and wanting. As we have seen, Hawke had improved the prospects of lieutenants, and in 1778, thanks to the efforts of Lord Howe, an increase in the half pay of captains was granted. But service in peace-time, with no prospect of prize money or adventure, was not popular, and many officers left to fight in the Russian and Swedish navies,

or accepted employment in the Merchant Service. For the men of the lower deck nothing had been done. Between 1774 and 1780 175,900 were entered. It is on record that about 42,000 deserted during the last four years of this period. These figures show clearly that no efforts were made to popularise service in the Navy. Men were obtained by the offer of very large bounties, but this very large drainage of personnel could have been checked if those responsible for the country's defence had not been blind to what was required and had made some efforts to make peacetime service attractive.

And so, in the course of a few years, a great legacy was dissipated. During these years home affairs and political battles had absorbed the attention of Ministers. They were blind to the storms that were brewing in the outside world, with the result that the outbreak of hostilities found the first line of defence in a weak and impoverished condition.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM PEACE TO WAR

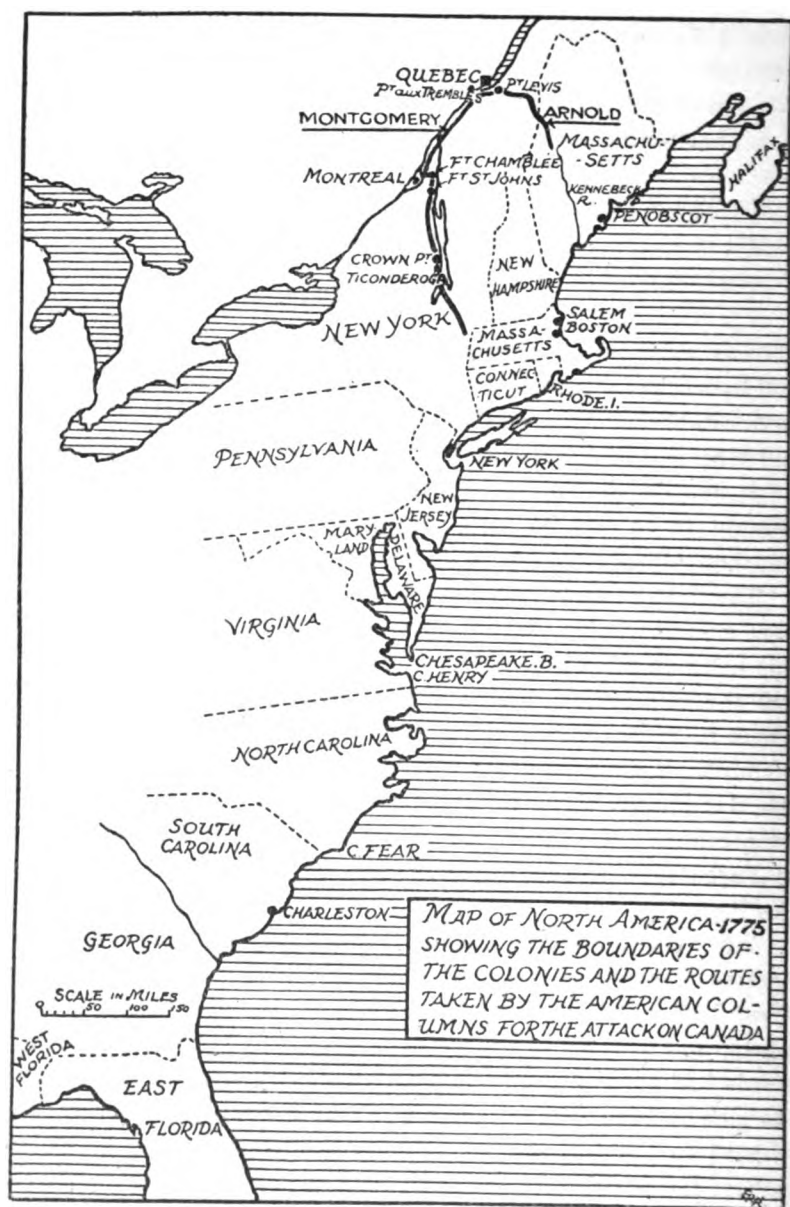
‘ THERE shall be a Christian, universal and perpetual peace, as well by sea as by land, and a sincere and constant friendship shall be re-established between their Britannic, Most Christian, Catholic and Most Faithful Majesties.’

So ran the preamble of the Definitive Treaty of Peace which 1763 brought to an end the long struggle between England and the Bourbon Alliance, known as the Seven Years War.

The circumstances attending the execution of this Treaty were so remarkable that we may pause for a brief reference to this interesting page of history. The retreat of Pitt from office, and the enforced retirement of the Duke of Newcastle from the wreck to which he had clung with abject grasp, left the King's favourite, Bute, head of the Government. His policy was to end the war on any terms and to detach England from Continental connections. The Treaty of Paris was signed, and a large majority in Parliament, corrupted and bought by Henry Fox, approved the Peace.

After the conquest of Canada Pitt had projected an expedition against Martinique, the most important French position in the West Indian Islands. Early in 1762 Martinique, Grenada, St. Lucia, and a chain of islands extending from Hispaniola southwards had surrendered. Havana fell shortly afterwards, and so the richest prize of the whole war, so far as Spain was concerned, yielded to the British Flag. Thus without sustaining a single reverse in the Western Hemisphere, if we except the temporary occupation of Newfoundland, England humbled the pride of France and Spain. On the continent of Europe it was the same.





MAP I

Spain was compelled to evacuate Portugal. In Westphalia the British and Hanoverian armies were successful, and the French were driven out of Hanover. With these operations the continental war terminated. 1763

Bute lost no time in making overtures to the allied enemy. Preliminaries were arranged before the result of the expedition to Havana was known. The conquest of the Philippines counted for nothing in the negotiations, for it was ignominiously agreed that any unknown conquests of the British forces should be unconditionally restored. With more prevision, Grimaldi, the Spanish Minister, delayed affixing his signature until advices should arrive from the West Indies. He shrewdly based his conduct upon the belief that the British Government, whatever were their successes by land and sea, would wish in any event to conclude peace. Happily Bute was overruled by his more sober colleagues of the Cabinet, and some equivalent was demanded for the important and improvident concessions he would have made. The barren province of Florida was yielded by Spain.

The Treaty was signed at Fontainebleau on the 10th of February, 1763, by the Duke of Bedford, Choiseul, and Grimaldi. Feb. 10 The whole of the French provinces in North America were ceded. The French were confirmed in the right of fishing on the banks of Newfoundland. In the West Indies England retained Tobago, Dominica, St. Vincent, and Grenada, but she restored Martinique and St. Lucia. Goree in Africa was restored to the French, though Pitt had refused to do this when France proposed articles of peace in the previous year. In the East Indies no military occupation was allowed to France although she retained her factories.

In Europe the French agreed to evacuate Hesse and Hanover with Wesel and Gueldres. Minorca and Belleisle were exchanged, and the fortifications of Dunkirk were reduced. On the other hand, Spain was much more humiliated than the House of Bourbon. Grievances relating to the captures made by British cruisers, the claim to logwood in Honduras and to fish on the banks of Newfoundland, all of these grounds for the Spanish declaration of war, were abandoned.

This would not have been Pitt's peace. He would have struck

1763 a death blow at the United House of Bourbon ; but enemies humiliated and disgraced have ways of recovery, and from historical analogies it may be deduced that the Treaty was better as it was. Macaulay describes the peace as honourable and advantageous to England though less than might have been expected from a long and unbroken series of victories by land and sea in every part of the world. Other works maintain that though open to criticism the peace secured to this country everything worth having.

In the year following the Treaty of Paris there was a fair prospect that public business would be undisturbed ; but danger, at length, arose from a quarter of apparent tranquillity. One of the outcomes of the Seven Years War was the necessity to suppress the smuggling trade. Smugglers disregarded the Customs laws to such an extent that it became necessary to employ the Royal Navy as officers of the Customs House. Unfortunately the Government extended a system of suppression, very necessary in British waters, to a trade which had sprung up in the distant dependencies across the Atlantic. America had been in the habit of exporting to the Spanish colonies manufactured goods which she had received from England. Out of these profits the American Colonists were able to adjust the balance of trade with the Mother Country. To the minds of the colonists, a trade which had been carried on for so many years had lost the character of contraband and had become legitimate commerce. The new policy of England bred consternation and resentment. The British cruisers swept the seas capturing colonial merchandise, and, as if this were not enough, the English Parliament began to enact measures which for the first time put into words the prescriptive right of the Mother Country to impose taxation on the Colonies. The preamble of an Act of the British Parliament laid it down that the legislature had the right to impose taxation on the Colonies. Customs duties were to be levied partly for revenue purposes, partly for the protection of sugar-growing plantations. Another statute provided for the substitution of a metallic for a paper currency, and, lastly, on the motion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was agreed to raise new and additional revenue in the

Colonies by means of a Stamp Duty. Grenville's intentions were doubtless innocent. His idea was to enforce the revenue laws impartially throughout the Empire, and to apply a statute which made no distinction between a smuggler on the Thames and a smuggler on the Hudson. Between external and internal taxes he allowed no difference. This Kingdom, he said, has the sovereign, the supreme, legislative power over America, and taxation is part of that sovereign power. Again, in justification of the policy of taxing the American Colonies, it was alleged that the proceeding was undertaken on their account, and that they were saved from a foreign enemy by the exertions of the Mother Country. But the argument is not sound. The historical animosity between England and France had never died down, and France had always been jealous of the growing maritime power of England and her predominance in the markets of the world : and she therefore struck at England's flourishing dependencies with a view to humble her pride and power. 1763

Parliament was informed of the Government's intention of introducing this Stamp Act in 1764. The colonists, from various points of view, strongly objected to the proposed Act and sent home formal remonstrances ; but these did not deflect the Government from the unfortunate policy it had adopted. The Act was passed almost unopposed in March 1765 and Ministers were completely taken aback by the resistance and indignation which resulted. Their intelligence must have been faulty, and though that may be partially explained by the long distance that separated the two countries, communication being by packet vessel and frigate, yet it is easy to see from the correspondence of the time that men on the spot were not fully alive to the strength of the storm that was brewing. The Act was reprinted in New York with the death's-head affixed instead of the Royal Arms and sold to the public under the title ' England's Folly and America's Ruin.' 1764 1765 Mar.

Isolated cases of destruction of property and threats to revenue officers gradually grew into definite constitutional opposition. This first appeared in the Assembly of Virginia when Patrick Henry brought forward a resolution to the effect that the inhabitants

1765 of a colony alone had the power to levy taxes. During his speech he said 'Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Oliver Cromwell, and George the Third' . . . he was then called to order, and finished with ' . . . may profit by their experience ! If this be treason make the most of it.' Other colonies, hitherto divided on many questions, took the same line as Virginia, and delegates from nine out of the thirteen colonies met in congress at New York in October 1765 to protest against the Stamp Act and send memorials to the Home Government claiming the right of self-taxation. It was not, however, left to the authors of this detested Act to deal with this opposition. The Government was defeated on the Regency Bill, and the new Ministry formed by Lord Rockingham was at once faced with the consequences of the Act. Amongst the appointments to this new Ministry was that of Lord George Sackville, who was restored to the Privy Council and made Vice-Treasurer of Ireland. His reappearance in public life at this time was singularly unfortunate as he was subsequently appointed Secretary for the Colonies. Pitt, temporarily restored to health, reappeared in Parliament and advocated the repeal of the measure, which was carried in March 1766, but a Declaratory Act passed at the same time, which affirmed the Home Government's right to tax the colonists, still kept the sore running.

1766  
Mar.

July On Rockingham's dismissal in July 1766 a Ministry was formed with the Duke of Grafton as First Lord of the Treasury Charles Townshend as Chancellor of the Exchequer, whilst Pitt, who was raised to the Peerage as Earl of Chatham, took the office of Lord Privy Seal. This was the Ministry which Burke described as 'a tessellated pavement without cement.' American affairs at once occupied attention, and in 1767 Townshend introduced a Revenue Act for the purpose of raising funds for the payment of colonial officials. The colony of Massachusetts, for one, took exception on the grounds that their officials should not be dependent on the Home Government. Unfortunately, at the same time as the Massachusetts Assembly were taking active steps to resist the duty, an incident occurred at Boston which served to add fuel to the fire. The sloop *Liberty*, having been seized by

1767

the Customs Authorities on the ground that a cargo had been landed without paying full duty, was compelled to take refuge under the guns of H.M.S. *Romney* to avoid recapture by the townspeople. Rioting followed, and demands for the withdrawal of the King's ship were made, but the Governor did not feel strong enough to take any measures against the rioters. Townshend died in the autumn of 1767, and was succeeded in the office of Chancellor by Lord North. 1767

Early in 1770 Grafton resigned and Lord North became Prime Minister, an office he held for twelve years. Burke describes him as 'a man of admirable parts, of general knowledge, of a versatile understanding, fitted for every sort of business, of infinite wit and pleasantry, of a delightful temper, and with a mind most perfectly disinterested': but adds 'it would be only to degrade myself by a weak adulation and not to honour the memory of a great man to deny that he wanted something of the vigilance and spirit of command that the time required.' 1770

The movement of two regiments from Halifax to Boston in 1768 was another milestone on the road of drift, for the townspeople regarded their arrival as a threat and began to arm themselves. In March 1770 an affray took place between the soldiers and the townspeople, which became known as the Boston Massacre. Actually only three colonists were killed, but blood had been spilled, and, furthermore, the Governor felt unable to resist the colonists' demand for the withdrawal of troops from the town. Lord North, still anxious for peace, brought forward a conciliatory measure in the form of a Bill to repeal Townshend's taxes, but once more good intentions were frustrated when, in 1773, some letters of Governor Hutchinson to a Member of Parliament, containing denunciations of the colonists, came into the possession of Benjamin Franklin, Deputy Postmaster-General for America, who made every use of them. The Massachusetts Assembly demanded the dismissal of the Governor, and the case was heard by the Privy Council. Franklin was called and was attacked unmercifully by Wedderburn, the Solicitor-General, and left the Council an embittered man. 1773

In 1772 Lord North brought in a Bill to enable the East India

1773 Company to export tea to America direct. The Bill was intended to help the East India Company, but it should at the same time have been a boon to the colonists. This supposed boon was the cause of the next trouble. Before even the tea ships arrived at Boston there had been rioting and displays of violence against the Customs Officers, and in December 1773 a mob disguised as Mohawk Indians boarded the ships and threw the cargoes overboard. The Home Government had now to act, and in March 1774 Lord North proposed measures to close the port of Boston and transfer all its rights to Salem until compensation was forthcoming. At the same time General Thomas Gage was appointed as Governor of the Province of Massachusetts, and Vice-Admiral Samuel Graves was appointed to command the North American Station. The soldier and sailor had thus displaced the civilian, and one step further had been taken towards the definite outbreak of hostilities.

Dec.

1774  
Mar.

Graves was sixty-one years of age ; as a lieutenant he had served at Cartagena in 1741, and as a captain he had commanded ships in the Channel Fleet under Anson and Hawke during the Seven Years War. In 1759 he had taken part in the Battle of Quiberon Bay. Evidently a man of long experience as a sea officer, but one who had never before held a high command.

Gage's first act was to endeavour to prevent the Assembly electing a representative to the Congress which had just been called into existence, but he failed. The first Congress, consisting of fifty-two delegates, met at Philadelphia in 1774, and from the day of this meeting it must have been evident to all that the colonies were now united for action. A petition was addressed to the King, a memorial sent to the people of Great Britain, and an appeal to the Canadians to join forces in a common cause. In the meantime Gage and Graves were attempting, under great difficulties, to put into force the Act for the closing of Boston. Not only was the Act badly drafted and permitted ships in ballast to leave, ships with donations of food from other colonies to arrive, and shipbuilding to be continued, but Graves was sadly handicapped by lack of ships. His total fleet of seventeen ships, most of which were very small vessels, was quite inadequate for

the very long coastline under his command.<sup>1</sup> Boston was a difficult harbour to watch effectively and many vessels escaped his cruisers. He had also to provide ships to deal with the smugglers who, at the time, were very active, and try to meet constant demands from the Governors of other States to provide ships for their safety. To make matters worse none of his ships were fully manned. Graves wrote home requesting that more ships and cruisers should be sent as reinforcements, but the request was answered in niggardly fashion by the Admiralty.<sup>2</sup> He endeavoured to purchase small vessels in the coast towns and arm them, but this measure met with little success as the colonists took every possible step to prevent him acquiring any ships. He arranged for artificers to be brought from New York so that his little squadron could be kept in repair, and it was well he did so, as in a short time no Bostonian dared work on the King's ships.

Graves was severely criticised for his conduct during his tenure of command. William Eden (afterwards Lord Auckland), writing in 1775 to Lord George Germain, described Gage and Graves as 'A worthy General, with parts inferior to his situation, and a corrupt Admiral without any shadow of capacity.'<sup>3</sup> More damning still is the following extract from a letter written by General Burgoyne to Germain the next year:—

'General Gage is an officer totally unsuited for the command, and to this many of the misfortunes the King's arms have suffered may be traced.

'It may be asked in England what is the Admiral doing? I wish I was able to answer that question satisfactorily. But I can only say what he is not doing:—That he is not supplying the troops with sheep and oxen, the dinners of the best of us bear meagre testimony, the want of broth in the hospital bears a more meagre one. He is not defending his own flocks and herds, for the enemy have repeatedly and in the most insulting manner plundered his own appropriated islands.

<sup>1</sup> On June 30, 1774, the fleet consisted of one 50-gun ship, three frigates, thirteen sloops and schooners.

<sup>2</sup> On June 30, 1775, the fleet consisted of four ships of fifty guns and above, seven frigates, eighteen sloops and schooners.

<sup>3</sup> H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.



1774 'He is not defending the other islands in the harbour, for the enemy landed in force, burned the lighthouse at noonday and killed and took a party of Marines almost under the guns of two or three men of war.

'He is not employing his ships to keep up communication and intelligence with the servants and friends of Government at different parts of the continent for I do not believe General Gage has received a letter from any correspondent out of Boston these six months.

'He is surely intent on greater objects you will think; supporting in material points the dignity and terror of the British Flag and where a number of boats have been built for the rebels, privateers fitted out, prizes carried in, the King's armed vessels sunk, the crews made prisoners, the officers killed, he is doubtless enforcing instant restitution and reparation by the voice of cannon and laying towns in ashes which refuse his terms.

'Alas! he is not.

'The British thunder is diverted or controlled by pitiful attentions and quaker-like scruples, and, under such an influence, insult and impunity, like righteousness and peace, have kissed each other.' <sup>1</sup>

Graves may have been a mediocrity, but this is very harsh criticism, and it is now possible to appreciate the impossibility of his task. The proceedings offer a good object lesson of the futility of a Government ordering force to be used when its Admirals or Generals have no adequate means at their disposal.

In the autumn of 1774 a General Election took place in England, and, on the new Parliament meeting, American affairs were the principal topic. Lord North now realised that, not Massachusetts Bay, but nearly the whole of the colonies had to be dealt with, and his proposed measures included a strengthening of the military forces and the cutting off of the disaffected colonies (i.e., all except New York, Delaware, and North Carolina) from the fisheries and trade with the Mother Country. The King, too, was determined on strong measures. In September he wrote to Lord North 'The die is now cast: the colonies must either submit or triumph; I

<sup>1</sup> H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.

do not wish to come to severer measures but we must not retreat.' 1774

A great deal of discussion on these proposals and counter-proposals took place in Parliament. Chatham proposed an Address to the King requesting him to reduce the troops at Boston 'in order to open the way towards a happy settlement of the troubles in America.' With true foresight he told the Government that they would be 'forced to a disgraceful abandonment of their present measures and principles, which they avow but cannot defend.' He justified the resistance of the colonists, and told the House that more was required than the repealing of an Act. American fears and resentment must also be repealed. He was ill-supported, and the motion was lost by sixty-eight votes to eighteen.

In the meantime events had taken a further turn for the worse in America, where professions of loyalty to the King now involved personal danger. In Massachusetts the Assembly was providing firearms and endeavouring to secure the alliance of the Indians. In New Hampshire a mob had seized a supply of arms. In Rhode Island steps had been taken to raise troops. In Connecticut officers had been appointed and drills enforced.

At last, in April 1775, the slow match reached the powder when Gage sent out a force to seize some military stores the colonists had collected. The stores were destroyed, but the force was heavily attacked at Lexington on its return journey to Boston, and lost sixty-five killed and 185 wounded. A few days later a party of volunteers, with the approval of the Governor of Connecticut, surprised the weak garrisons at Ticonderoga and Crown Point and captured these important posts. 1775 April

Before the news of these reverses had reached England Lord North had taken steps to reinforce the troops in America, and Major-General William Howe, brother of the Admiral, arrived at Boston with 10,000 men in May 1775. With him were Major-Generals Clinton and Burgoyne. Many people in England considered that the force was inadequate, and, as though still determined not to face the situation, Parliament was only asked to vote five and a half million pounds for the services for the year, May

## CHAPTER

## XVI. EUROPEAN WATERS

Geary as Commander-in-Chief—Franco-Spanish neutrality—Relations with Holland—Efforts to steer in a precarious position.

## XVII. THE FIGHT FOR THE FOURTH PHASE

British failure at St. Pierre—Rodney takes command—The fleet affected by the treasure—Intercept a French squadron—Manceuvres of the fleet—French failure at St. Pierre—fleets in sight of one another—Rodney sails for the North American coast—Comments on the fourth phase.

## XVIII. BRITISH DEFENSIVE

Des Touches sails from New York—The fleets meet—Comments—Diversion at New York—Cornwallis at North—Battle at Cowpens—Hobkirk's Hill—Loss of the British—Battle at Eutaw Springs—Petersburg—British command arrives at New York—Graves and Hood sail from the Chesapeake—Battle of the Clouds—Movements after the battle—The Capitulation—Comments on the campaign.

## XIX. EUROPEAN WATERS

French attack Jersey—Darby—Comments—Loss of the convoy—Franco-Spanish Armada in the Atlantic—The Main Fleet—convoy—Battle of Dog Bank—sails from Brest—Kemp

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1775 and the number of seamen asked for was actually 2,000 less than in the previous estimates. The First Lord in the House of Lords spoke in contemptuous tones of the colonists and affirmed that the Navy was quite strong enough for the task of subduing them ; but, as he was speaking, Graves was finding his task impossible, due to lack of ships and lack of men.

June The colonists now became more active, and in June, having learned that Gage intended to occupy Bunkers Hill in order the better to command the town, stole a march and occupied it themselves. The British commanders decided on a direct attack, and their troops, numbering 2,200, received very heavy punishment before they obtained their objective, losing 226 killed and 828 wounded, and learned for the first time that they were dealing with an enemy not to be underrated in military qualities.

In the meanwhile the second Congress had met and decided to raise a large army and appoint as Commander-in-Chief George Washington, a man then known to possess some technical military skill, and, more important, great intelligence, energy and courage. The arrival of Washington in command of the colonists' troops at Boston marked a great change in their conduct and military value, and from that day the difficulties of the British troops increased, and they became practically invested.

The weakness of the control of the sea communications was soon shown when two vessels from Philadelphia and South Carolina sailed across to Bermuda and seized a large quantity of gunpowder, and the colonists added greatly to the difficulties in which Gage was now involved by frequent sorties in boats to destroy stock and fodder. They were quite alive to their enemy's weakness and soon numbers of armed vessels began to appear, the first sea action of the war being fought on the 23rd of November 1775, when two American privateers captured the *Hunter* and a brig.

Sept. During the whole year the ships and men of Graves' weak  
1775 squadron never had a moment's rest, and it was not until September 1775, that the Home Government authorised Graves to capture colonial merchant vessels. Similar orders were sent at the same time to Rear-Admiral Gayton, Commander-in-Chief

Jamaica Station, Vice-Admiral Young, Commander-in-Chief Leeward Islands, and Vice-Admiral Man, Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean. This tardiness in giving the Admiral permission to employ to the full such power as his little fleet might exercise may be compared with the shifty expedients discussed by Ministers when attempting to draw up orders for Hawke at the beginning of the Seven Years War. Graves at this time ordered some ships to bombard the coastal towns in accordance with orders sent out from home, a drain on his resources that was not justifiable. Demands on him increased daily; the Governors of many provinces had to take refuge on board men-of-war; the Governors of the Southern colonies were crying for ships; and fears were even entertained for the safety of Halifax. Worse still was the endless succession of orders from the Admiralty. In a typical week in September their Lordships sent him three letters. The first ordered him 'to visit every harbour in the said colonies to disable ships fitting out'; the second 'to convey transports to the ports to demand provisions'; the third 'to examine the ballast of all vessels arriving in North America to see if their masters have ballasted with flint stones.'<sup>1</sup> The dissipation of the legacy of the Seven Years War was indeed being felt. Such ships as were sent out as reinforcements were in poor condition, and the following letter from the Captain of the *Viper* to the Admiral shows clearly the state of affairs:—

'I am very much distressed for Petty Officers as well as Warrants. My Carpenter infirm and past duty, my Gunner made from a livery servant—neither seaman nor gunner; my Master a man in years, never an officer before, made from a boy on board one of the guardships, he then keeping a public-house at Gosport. Petty Officers I have but one who owns himself mad at times. A Master's Mate I have not nor anything I can make a Boatswain's Mate. I have not one person I could trust with the charge of a vessel I might take to bring her in.'<sup>2</sup>

Gage handed over the command to General Howe in October. From the outset he had been in an unfortunate position. The

<sup>1</sup> Admiralty Out Letters, September 14 and 19, 1775.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Beston in *Naval and Military Memoirs*.



1775 colonists looked upon him as a cruel oppressor, the Home Government as a weak, incompetent man, and his fate was that of many others who have had to attempt operations with inadequate forces. Graves also retired in to obscurity. He received a curt letter of dismissal. 'The service on which you have been employed being at an end, you are hereby required and directed to strike your flag and come on shore.'<sup>1</sup> He was succeeded by Rear-Admiral Shulldham. That Eden should write 'Shulldham goes well convinced that he is to act in every respect as against an enemy'<sup>2</sup> shows that there were many who still could not bring themselves to regard the colonists as 'the enemy.' As a young man Shulldham had fought at Cartagena in 1741; in 1756, when captain of a 60-gun ship, he had attacked a French ship in the West Indies before war had been declared and had been taken prisoner; in 1759 he had taken part in Moore's operations in the West Indies. He was Member of Parliament for Fowey when appointed Commander-in-Chief on the coast of America. His past career in no way indicated that he was a man fitted for a big part, but he was not called on to do more than escort troop transports, for he was relieved by Lord Howe before the sea lines of communication were seriously threatened. The force he took over from Graves consisted of one 50-gun ship, seven frigates, eleven sloops and five schooners.<sup>3</sup> Like Graves he received constant orders to carry out operations—destroy enemy shipping, protect Bermuda and New Providence, assist Colonial Governors—which he could not possibly undertake with his small force.

We must now turn to follow the fortunes of the small party of colonists who had seized Crown Point and Ticonderoga. Congress decided to pursue the advantage which had been gained, and to invade Canada. They knew the weakness of the British force in Canada under General Sir Guy Carleton, Wolfe's old lieutenant, and, with the lessons of the Seven Years War still fresh, realised the value of Lake Champlain as a waterway and the importance

<sup>1</sup> Admiralty Out Letter, February 22, 1776.

<sup>2</sup> Eden to Germain, September 27, 1775 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>3</sup> Graves took home three of the heavier ships and only left Shulldham one 50-gun ship.

of securing the military posts on the St. Lawrence before they could be strengthened. The operation decided on was invasion by two columns. Richard Montgomery, a retired British officer, was given command of 2,400 men and ordered to advance from Ticonderoga, take Montreal, and then attack Quebec, whilst Benedict Arnold, a leader of proved skill and courage, with a smaller force of 1,100 men was ordered to move by the Kennebec River, cross the intervening wilderness, and strike the St. Lawrence. Montgomery's column, after capturing the frontier posts of Chamblée and St. Johns, entered Montreal, which had been evacuated by the weak British garrison, and then moved eastward to Pointe aux Trembles, where he joined Arnold. Arnold had, in the meantime, performed a most remarkable journey, during which he lost nearly half his men. His column had endured immense privations in crossing practically unknown country, and had only won through by extraordinary perseverance. He eventually arrived at Point Levis opposite Quebec, and despite all he had gone through determined to attack. After first crossing the river he climbed the Heights of Abraham by the same path as Wolfe had sixteen years before, and summoned the town to surrender. His flag was fired on, and he then retreated westwards to join forces with Montgomery. Carleton was now to prove a worthy disciple of his great master, Wolfe. He organised with skill, made the best use of such resources as he had, brought seamen ashore from the ships in the river, and put life into his meagre garrison. The Colonists' army appeared before the town on the 5th of December, and Montgomery demanded surrender. Carleton gave a proper reply, and the American commanders then decided to attempt an assault, which was delivered after careful preparation on the 31st of December, but thanks to a sterling defence, was repulsed with heavy loss. Montgomery was killed leading his men, Arnold was badly wounded, and the Colonists retreated and established themselves three miles up river, so as to cut off Quebec from the land side. The garrison could expect no help from the sea side as the river was still icebound.

1775

Dec. 5

The year 1775 ended with no signal success to cheer the hard-pressed British forces in America. Quebec, which the skilful

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1775 generalship of Wolfe and Saunders had so recently added to the British Crown, was invested ; the British army at Boston was besieged and enduring great privations ; the badly equipped and weak squadron, now under Shuldham, was quite unable to compete with an active and ever-increasing enemy fleet of privateers and armed boats. At home the land and sea officers were being vilified, and the nerves of those who were 3,000 miles from the scene of hostilities were not proving as strong as those of the men on the spot.

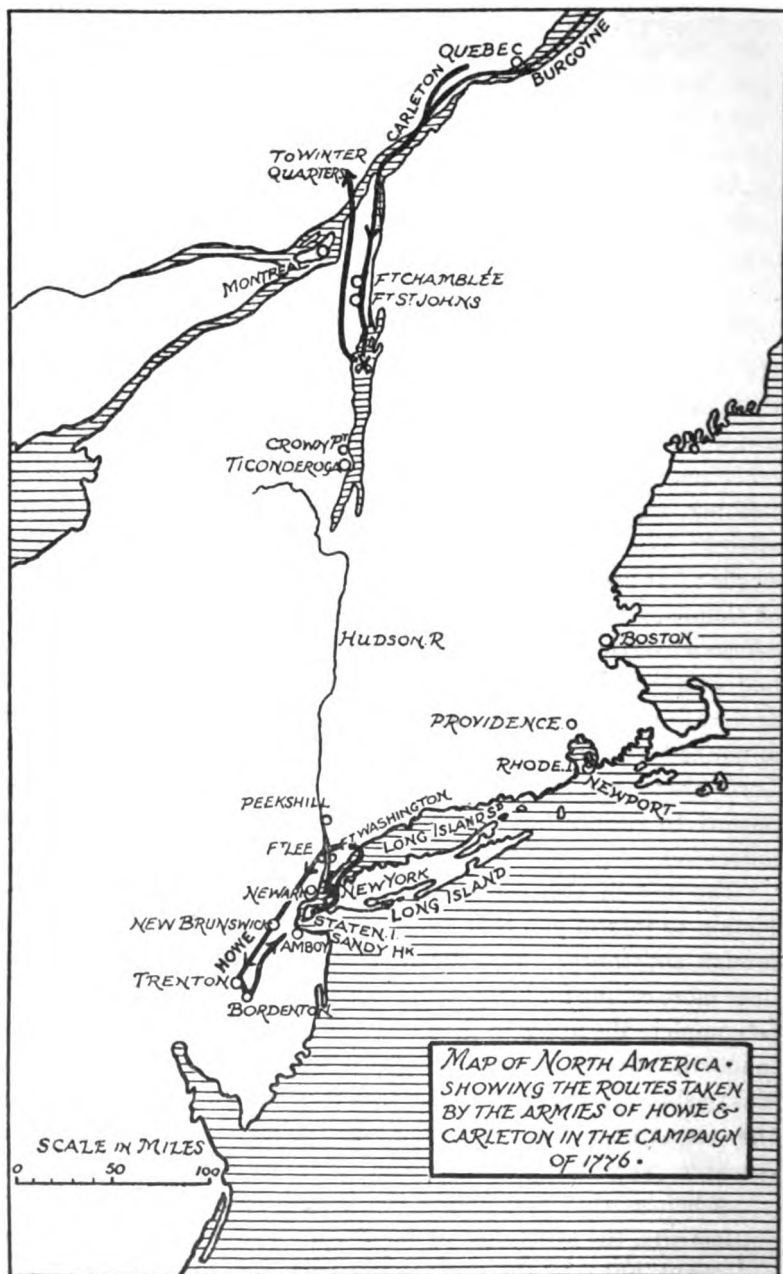
It is interesting to speculate on the results that would have followed the despatch of an efficient fleet in command of an energetic admiral to the North American Station in the early days of the trouble. Such a fleet could have closed the port of Boston effectively, controlled the whole seaboard, and provided the hard-pressed Governors and Colonial Authorities with something definite to support them in their endeavours to enforce order and uphold the King's rule. Complete command of the tradeways and communications, coupled with a strong show of force in the various harbours, would have given a very different turn to the course of events.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OPENING MOVES IN NORTH AMERICA, 1776

By the autumn of 1775 the King and his Government had realised 1776  
that neither the small forces in America nor the conciliatory  
measures already published were likely to quench the fires of  
rebellion. Parliament was summoned to meet on the 26th of  
October, and the King's speech was entirely devoted to American  
affairs. The policy of the Government was crystallised in the  
words : ' It has now become the part of wisdom, and, in its effects,  
of clemency to put a speedy end to these disorders by the most  
decisive exertions.' All might have been well if the Government  
had proceeded with the forceful measures indicated in this bold  
declaration : but their deeds fell far short of their words. The  
announcement that General Sir William Howe and Vice-Admiral  
Lord Howe had been appointed as Joint Commissioners with  
powers to restore peace was the first step towards a policy of  
indecision.

The speech also contained this passage : ' I have the satisfaction to inform you that I have received most friendly offers of foreign assistance.' This meant that a British Government was once more calling for hired troops from Hesse-Cassel and Brunswick to complete the army to the necessary strength. The Opposition made the strongest protests against this proposal, and, as time was to show, it was unfortunate that they were unable to persuade the Government to reconsider the policy. The Colonists in America were furious when the news reached them. When, years before, they had fought the French for possession of their settlements, the assistance of hired continental troops had been welcomed, but now the quarrel was with men of their own race,



MAP II

and nothing could exceed their bitterness when they learned that foreign troops were to be turned against them. Parliament, at last alive to the situation, authorised a large increase in the estimates and a considerable strengthening of the personnel of the services. A number of ships were put into commission, the bounty was increased, and two Vice-Admirals, Douglas and Amherst, were specially appointed to Portsmouth and Plymouth to expedite matters. 1776

In November Lord George Sackville, who had changed his name to Germain, succeeded Lord Dartmouth as Secretary for the Colonies. It was to prove a disastrous selection. He had doubtless shown capacity as a debater in the Commons, but his incapacity for military command had been proved at the Battle of Minden. As Secretary for the Colonies he was responsible for the direction of operations in America and for the issue of orders to the Generals, who, with few exceptions, distrusted him.

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cashiered !!

The Colonists took the offensive early in 1776. Congress, infuriated by the King's speech, sent orders to Washington to redouble his efforts and drive Howe's army into the sea. Howe was soon in a difficult position. He was harassed by attacks directed by an able opponent, and did not know if and when he might expect reinforcements. He eventually decided to evacuate his army and sail for Halifax where he could reorganise and await them. The evacuation was successfully carried out by the 17th of March, and the transports, under the escort of Shuldham's squadron, arrived safely at their destination early in April. Mar. 17

The beleaguered troops in Quebec fared better, thanks to the enterprise of Captain Douglas, who had been appointed to commission the *Isis* on October 1775, and given orders to proceed to the relief of Quebec with all despatch. Forcing his way through thick ice he arrived in the basin on the 6th of May just in time to succour the garrison. Arnold retreated, and for the second time in sixteen years the arrival of a ship of war decided the fate of Canada. May 6

The Colonists may have had the best of it in the early moves, but they were soon compelled to abandon their offensive and adopt a defensive rôle as the British plan of campaign matured.

1776 That plan was prepared with the object of attacking the enemy at three widely separated points—Canada, the New York district, and the Carolinas. The object of the operation in the North was to drive the enemy out of Canada, and, as Carleton's troops were insufficient for the purpose, a strong reinforcement under Burgoyne was embarked in transports at Portsmouth and ordered to proceed to Quebec. In the New York district Washington's army was the objective, but it was necessary to reinforce Howe's army before he could undertake offensive operations. The attack on the Carolinas was intended as a diversion, and for command of the expedition the Government's choice fell upon General Clinton, who was serving as a Divisional Commander under Howe; but, as the main army could not spare sufficient men, a reinforcement under Major-General Earl Cornwallis was ordered to embark at Portsmouth and rendezvous off the coast of Virginia. No Government, unless in desperate straits, will risk troops afloat on an uncommanded sea without adequate protection, and the Admiralty were called on to guarantee the safety of the transports during their voyage across the Atlantic. The resultant drain on their resources was the direct outcome of the weakness of the North American fleet in the earlier years.

The Colonists had been permitted to man and equip a large number of privateers, and these small beginnings had developed into an organised force. Whilst large bounties were needed to obtain men for the British Navy, the Colonists found no difficulty in manning their new navy with a fine body of seamen recruited from the seafaring population on their extensive seaboard. The efficiency and determination of this new navy forced the Admiralty to employ a large number of ships of the line on escorting duty, and the power of a well-handled mosquito fleet was never more clearly shown.

The plan which commended itself to the British Ministers, and against which few voices were raised, was destined to prove a failure. To strike the enemy simultaneously at three different points was a tempting proposition, and, to add to the temptation, the Government had reason to hope that the Southern force would receive considerable support from the loyalists. But this Southern

expedition was intended as a diversion, a type of operation only justifiable when the troops used cannot be employed in the main theatre, or when their appearance will compel the enemy to make a much greater detachment from their main army. Pitt had made full use of this form of warfare during the Seven Years War to assist Ferdinand in his struggle with the French Grand Army. As the British Fleet controlled the sea communications, overseas expeditions could be organised to attack vital points on the French coast at any chosen moment. These amphibious operations had compelled the French to weaken their land front in order to protect something they could not afford to lose. 1776

The situation in America was entirely different. If it had been certain that the armies of Howe and Carleton were entirely adequate for the work entrusted to them there would have been some justification for employing a third force to distract the enemy. But the enemy's strength could not be accurately gauged. The Colonists had had time to drill and obtain munitions, and, furthermore, had already shown that good-generalship was not wanting. If the British effort had been confined to securing definite success in the main theatre—even to the exclusion of the operations of driving the enemy from Canada—a very different story might have been told.

Before the British plans were fully developed the Colonists had taken a most important step which had far-reaching results on the course of the war. The Third Congress met at Philadelphia in May, and on the 4th of July the famous Declaration of Independence was promulgated. The first effect of this bold policy was to put an end to the secrecy which had hitherto been necessary in connection with certain negotiations with France. July 4

In 1775 French agents had been sent across the Atlantic to sound popular opinion amongst the Colonists. The French Foreign Minister, the Comte de Vergennes, like many other French statesmen, had not been slow to see in the tangled state of British affairs the glimmerings of an opportunity to recover all and more than France had lost as the result of the Seven Years War. Early in 1776 Congress had sent a Commission to France to buy arms, ammunition, and clothing, and this Commission

1776 obtained the services of a number of French officers, among whom was the famous Lafayette. From the date of the Declaration the purchase of army equipment abroad and the loading of ships proceeded openly.

The operations conducted by Howe, Carleton, and Clinton were not correlated, and so must be followed separately. A naval force was assigned to each commander, and the tasks the sea service was called on to perform were of a very diverse nature: lake warfare with improvised ships and weapons in the North, bombardment work in the South, and army supporting operations in New York waters.

Two days after the Quebec garrison had been relieved by Douglas a regiment detached by General Howe arrived in the basin. It was followed two days later by a regiment from England. Carleton then felt strong enough to advance against May 28 Arnold without waiting for Burgoyne. Burgoyne's reinforcements arrived on the 28th of May and hurried up river to join forces with Carleton about mid-way between Quebec and Montreal. During the passage across the Atlantic, Burgoyne asked Captain Dalrymple, who was in charge of the convoy, to allow the faster ships to push on, but the request was refused. He afterwards wrote that if this had been done he might have been able to cut off the enemy's retreat from Quebec. This incident throws an interesting light on the influence of the American privateers.

Arnold attacked the British position, but was driven off, and he then retired to Crown Point where he made preparations to contest the control of Lake Champlain. This lake campaign is of great interest.<sup>1</sup> Arnold worked feverishly to build and equip a flotilla, and finally put to sea with three schooners, a sloop, three galleys, and eight gondolas. The British under Captain Douglas, were equally active, and carried the planking and frames of two schooners overland from Chamblée to St. Johns. They also brought in small boats to the head of the lake the materials for building a ship. This ship, which mounted eighteen 12-pdr. guns, was christened the *Inflexible*. Her construction was a remarkable effort, and the flotilla finally assembled consisted of

<sup>1</sup> For details of ships see Appendix I.

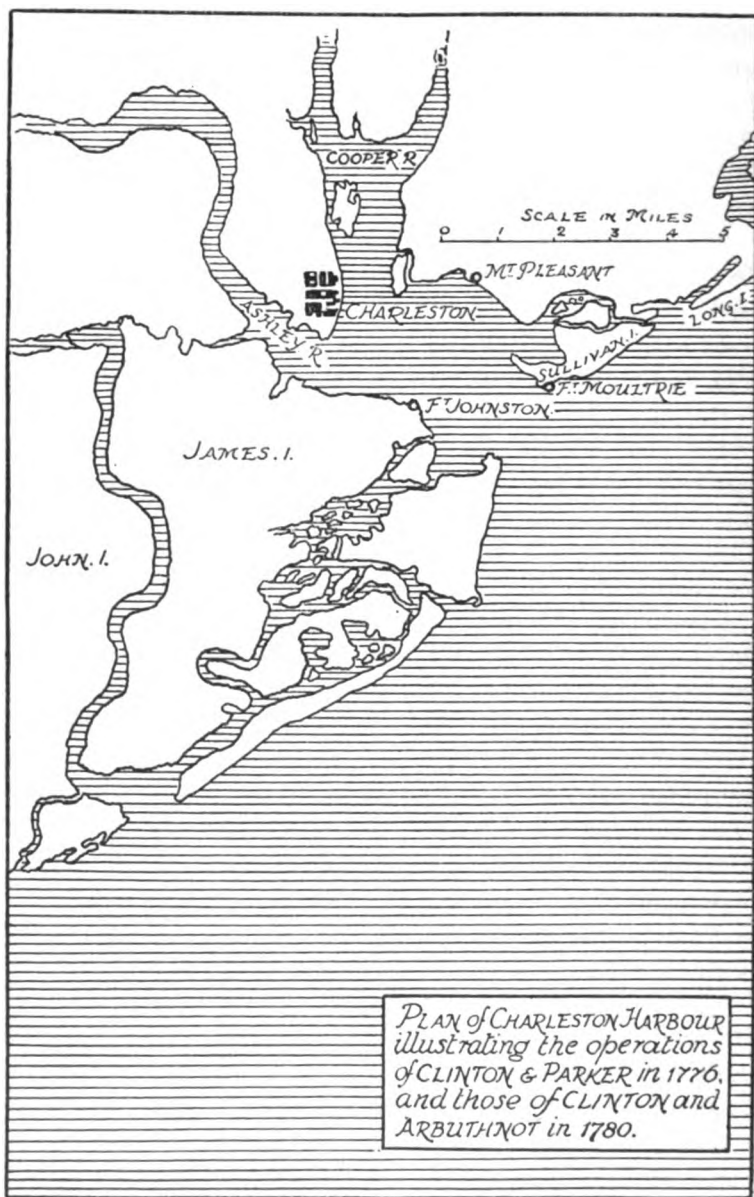
the *Inflexible*, two schooners, a radeau, a gondola, twenty gun-boats, and four long boats. This improvised fleet was manned by 670 ratings landed from ships in the St. Lawrence. Douglas was confident that the *Inflexible* would sweep all opposition off the lake, but time was the important factor, and, while he and his men were working marvels, the enemy's troops at the head of the lake were daily increasing. 1776

The two flotillas eventually met on the 11th of October, and, after three days' fighting, in which the superiority of the *Inflexible* was proved, Arnold's little squadron was practically wiped out. The actions were fought with great gallantry on both sides, and Arnold gave a foretaste of his ability as a leader. One of the many individual acts of bravery displayed during the fighting brought the name of Edward Pellew, afterwards Lord Exmouth, to the notice of the authorities. He was a midshipman in a ship that came under a heavy concentration of fire which killed or wounded all the other officers. He at once took command, and continued to fight his ship with great skill and bravery. Oct. 11

The effects of Arnold's energy and skill were far-reaching. The delay he had imposed on Carleton's advance completely upset the British plans. The season was too far advanced for further campaigning, and Carleton retired to winter quarters.

The Southern expedition met with even less success. Its proceedings will be described next, as the troops eventually joined Howe and took part in the operations round New York. In accordance with orders received from home, Howe detached Clinton and some companies of infantry in time to arrive at a rendezvous off Cape Fear, North Carolina, by the middle of April. Junction was made there with Lord Cornwallis's army which had been escorted out from England by a squadron under Sir Peter Parker. Clinton was ordered to take command of the whole force and attack some important point in the South in the hope of assisting Howe's operations by obliging the enemy to detach a force to the South. He selected Charleston, the capital of South Carolina, as a suitable objective, and the fleet and transports arrived off the port on the 4th of June. The fleet, under Sir Peter Parker, consisted of the 50-gun ship *Bristol*, April June 4





MAP III

four frigates, a sloop, a bomb vessel, a schooner, and transports 1776 carrying about 2,000 troops.

Some days were spent in sounding and buoying a channel, and it was not until the 15th that the troops were disembarked on Long Island and the ships all across the bar. One cause of the delay was that some of the *Bristol's* guns had to be hoisted out before she could cross the shallows. The main channel passed close to Sullivan's Island, and the enemy were erecting a fort on its southern end when the British expedition arrived. The Admiral and General decided to make a combined attack on this fort. A plan was prepared for the troops to ford the passage between Sullivan's Island and Long Island, and attack from the land side while the fleet bombarded from the sea. Time was of importance as the enemy were working feverishly to strengthen the fort : but the British force, which, in the meantime, had been strengthened by another 50-gun ship, did not move until the 28th. A 'flattering wind' was essential for the ships to sail to their positions for bombarding,<sup>1</sup> and the lack of this wind caused a delay which had serious consequences. On the 28th Parker led his squadron<sup>2</sup> in on the flood tide, and anchored two 50-gun ships and two frigates in a position to bombard. Three other frigates were ordered to proceed farther up channel to guard against fire-ships and enfilade the fort. There is little doubt that the officers and men of the British squadron thought their task an easy one, and Moultrie, the commander of the fort, said afterwards that, in the opinion of the officers of the garrison, two frigates would have been sufficient to destroy the works. June 28

But events took a very unexpected turn. The squadron opened a heavy bombardment against the fort, and the fortress gunners, well disciplined and under a capable commander, reserved their ammunition until the ships anchored, and then replied with a steady well-aimed fire. The fort, though hastily constructed, proved an efficient protection against the shot from the ships, and the ships offered a fine target to the enemy's fire. The

<sup>1</sup> Parker's Despatch '*Bristol* in Five Fathom Hole within Charleston Bar, July 9, 1776.'

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Appendix II.

1776 squadron held its position for nine and a half hours, during which many instances of gallantry were recorded. The Commodore himself was wounded when the *Bristol's* spring carried away and she presented her stern to a raking fire, but he refused assistance. Midshipman James Saumarez, afterwards the distinguished Admiral, displayed great courage in attempting to replace the spring. Lord William Campbell, the Governor of South Carolina, did yeoman service as a volunteer: and, indeed, all the officers and men behaved admirably under trying and unexpected conditions. The *Experiment* lost twenty-three killed and fifty-six wounded out of a complement of about 300, and the *Bristol* lost forty killed and seventy-one wounded, principally from the raking fire. The enemy's loss was thirty-seven killed and wounded.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the combined plan had completely failed. The ford between the islands proved too deep for the troops to cross, and the three frigates which had been ordered to enfilade the fort ran aground owing to bad pilotage. Parker thus found his efforts unassisted, and, as his casualties were high and the fort was still firing, he decided to unmoor.

The grounding of the three frigates was perhaps unavoidable as reliance had to be placed on men with local knowledge, but it is difficult to understand why the depth of water between the islands at every state of tide was not previously ascertained when the crossing over of the troops was the main feature of the plan.

No further attempt was made, and Parker and Clinton decided to sail for New York.

We now come to the operations of the main army. Howe remained at Halifax until June, expecting daily to hear that transports with reinforcements had been sighted in the offing, but none came, and, tired of waiting, he sailed for New York on the  
June 12 12th under a strong escort commanded by Shuldhham. We have already seen that escorts were now necessary owing to the strength and activity of the enemy privateers, and, at the time Howe sailed, the numbers operating had been considerably increased by the release of several vessels at Boston. Washington had driven off the British squadron operating off that port by mortars

and batteries specially erected for the purpose, and the energetic commanders of the ships that were set free had already captured transports carrying two companies of Highlanders. 1776

Howe and Shulldham arrived at Sandy Hook on the 29th, and the army was landed on Staten Island five days later. Washington's army was posted on the line of heights which run nearly the length of Long Island, and Howe decided to defer his attack until his army was reinforced. July 29

Admiral Lord Howe arrived in the *Eagle* on the 12th, and in accordance with his instructions attempted to get into communication with the Colonists in order to bring about an end to hostilities; but his efforts were unavailing, for, as we have seen, Congress had declared their independence four days before he arrived. July 12

The Admiral had sailed from St. Helen's on the 11th of May, but had been warned for the command some months earlier. No better illustration of his character can be found than in his many letters to the Admiralty whilst waiting to hoist his flag. No detail escaped him. Anchors, boats, length of spars, medical arrangements—all these and many other seamanship matters received his attention.

On his arrival on the station he was distressed at finding very few ships available for operations, and decided to concentrate at New York to co-operate with the Army.

Above all, he realised the necessity of a good anchorage for his fleet. 'Until His Majesty's troops can repossess some ports upon the coast of America, great difficulties will attend the execution of their orders; and that it will be impracticable in most parts of the winter season.'<sup>1</sup>

On the 12th of August eighty-five transports with footguards and Hessians arrived from England under the escort of Commodore Hotham, and on the 14th Parker and Clinton arrived from the South. The General was now ready, and he issued the necessary orders to put his army in motion. On the 15th Lord Howe detached Captain Hyde Parker, afterwards Nelson's Commander-in-Chief at Copenhagen, to reconnoitre up the Hudson Aug. 12

<sup>1</sup> Howe's letter to Admiralty, May 10, 1776.

1776 River. His force consisted of the *Phoenix*, forty-four guns, and two smaller vessels: and though the ships had to pass and repass strong enemy batteries the reconnaissance was successfully carried out. Parker was thirty-five days up the river and experienced every type of opposition—fireships, attempts to block, and attacks by shore artillery.

The position selected for landing the army was Gravesend Bay, Long Island, and the fleet was ordered to prepare a large number of boats to convey the troops to the shore. The command of the landing operations was given to Hotham. The organisation worked perfectly, and 15,000 men and forty guns were successfully  
 Aug. 22 landed on the 22nd under covering fire from frigates and bomb vessels. The General did not follow up this early success; instead he waited until he had still further increased his army on Long Island by the addition of the Hessians under General de Heister, which brought his force up to 25,000 men. He advanced again  
 Aug. 26 on the 26th, and, at his request, Parker, with three of the line and two frigates, moved towards New York to support his left flank 'and give a jealousy to the enemy on this side.'<sup>1</sup> The wind and tide unfortunately prevented the ships co-operating. The army eventually arrived opposite the enemy's position on the 27th after some preliminary fighting in which the Americans lost about 2,000 killed and wounded.

Washington was now in a precarious position. An army of great numerical superiority was preparing to make a frontal attack, and his only line of retreat was across a waterway too deep to ford. But his skill and resources were equal to the  
 Aug. 30 occasion. On the night of the 30th the American army of about 30,000 men silently evacuated their trenches and crossed the river with their rifles and ammunition by boat. It is difficult to understand why the British commanders neglected to provide for this contingency. The large fleet<sup>2</sup> which included two 64-gun ships, seven 50-gun ships, and a great number of frigates, could have provided a very strong flotilla of armed boats to control the waterway, and the General, in asking for the assistance of Parker's

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, September 18, 1776.'

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Appendix III.

squadron, evidently appreciated the value of co-operation with the fleet. 1776

After Washington's retreat an interlude occurred in the operations, as the General and Admiral thought the moment favourable for again entering into negotiations. By their orders from home they were expected one day to wear martial cloaks and the next day the garb of the peaceful Commissioners. General Howe was criticised for resting on his laurels after Washington's army had disappeared from Long Island, but the criticism should have been levelled against those responsible for the dual appointment. The two brothers probably welcomed any opportunity of putting an end to hostilities, for they were fighting against men who, for many reasons, commanded their sympathy, and amongst whom were many who had served under or known their gallant elder brother who met his death fighting in their cause during the Seven Years War.

Nothing came of the negotiations, and Howe set his army in motion with the object of driving the enemy from New York and the surrounding district. Washington had selected as his main position a line running from Fort Washington to the eastward, and had left only 4,000 men in the town. The command of the boats for the transfer of the army from Long Island to the mainland was once more given to Hotham, and the fleet was also called on to carry out a diversionary operation up the Hudson River. The conduct of this operation was entrusted to Hyde Parker, who, as usual, proved a courageous and resourceful leader.

On the 15th of September Hotham successfully landed the army Sept. 15 at Kipp's Bay under covering fire from five frigates, and the Americans in the town retreated and joined Washington. After reconnoitring the enemy's position, Howe decided not to make a direct attack but to attempt an outflanking movement by moving his army by water to the eastward. The difficult task of embarking and navigating the flotilla through Hell Gate fell once more on the broad shoulders of Hotham, and the army was successfully landed about ten miles to the eastward of New York. This movement compelled Washington to change his dispositions,

- 1776 as there was a possibility that his army would be caught between Howe's force and the naval force on the Hudson. He had plenty of time as Howe was again dallying in order further to strengthen his force by Hessian troops under General Knyphausen. But he had no intention of standing his ground or accepting general action with a greatly superior force, and when Howe again advanced, he adopted Fabian tactics and finally fell back into New Jersey early in November.

Howe then decided to capture Fort Lee and Fort Washington, which commanded the river navigation on the Hudson. To a summons to surrender, the Commandant of Fort Washington replied that he would defend his post to the last extremity. The operations were entrusted to Knyphausen and Cornwallis, and after a series of attacks the enemy surrendered to the number of 2,700. Howe then called on the fleet to assist in the capture of Fort Lee. The attacking force, under Cornwallis, was carried by boats to a position above the Fort in order to spring a surprise on the enemy ; but Greene, the Commandant, received early news of the British approach from a spy, and succeeded in evacuating in time.

- Cornwallis, reinforced by two Brigades, then pushed on after Washington's army, but the enemy retreated before him, impeding his advance by the destruction of bridges. At Brunswick he received orders from Howe that he was to go no further. He had intended to push straight on to the Delaware River, but was now compelled to wait until the arrival of his Commander-in-Chief on the 6th of December. The advance was then continued, but the river could not be crossed as the enemy had destroyed all the river craft.

Howe then decided to canton his army for the winter, and selected eight positions : New York, Haarlem, Amboy, Brunswick, Bordenton, Trenton, and Newark. He realised that this wide distribution of force was not desirable so long as Washington's army was still a live organism, but he trusted to the professed loyalty of the country-people, and concluded that his army was secure.

The American commander had experienced many difficulties during the operations which had forced him from New York to

Pennsylvania. His army had been constantly losing strength owing to men taking advantage of the expiration of their terms of enlistment, and its *morale* had suffered from the long series of rearguard actions. Once across the Delaware he was able to reorganise, and, having received some reinforcements from the force that had been facing Carleton at Ticonderoga, he crossed the river on Christmas night during a snowstorm and completely surprised the Hessian Brigade at Trenton, capturing 900 prisoners. This was a fine exploit. He had succeeded in reorganising and raising enthusiasm in a dispirited army, with little to help him except the Colonists' hatred of the foreign levies, who had already earned a bad reputation by their harsh bearing towards the inhabitants and their propensities for pillaging. 1776

Of this incident Howe wrote: 'Rall's defeat has put us much out of the way. His misconduct is amazing: Colonel Donop's conduct on this occasion is by no means commendable; retiring from his post without orders, leaving his sick behind him, rather denotes panic.

'The two Lieut.-Generals, Heister and Knyphausen, are much too infirm for this war, though I believe the latter extremely zealous for His Majesty's service: but I tremble when I think the former may remain with us another campaign.'<sup>1</sup>

Washington retired again after this exploit, and took up a strong defensive position from which he could not be dislodged. He did not remain there long. Reinforcements were arriving daily, and he was soon strong enough to undertake the offensive. He advanced into New Jersey, and, by skilful generalship and rapid movement, he soon compelled the scattered British forces to concentrate, with the result that by the first week in January only Brunswick and Amboy remained in British hands. The American army then went into winter quarters at Newark, Morristown, and Peekskill. 1777 Jan.

Towards the end of the year Congress introduced long-term enlistment for their army in order to prevent the constant drain and to raise its efficiency. They offered a large bounty and an

<sup>1</sup> Howe to Germain, 'December 31, New York' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).



1777 allotment of land to those joining the army and to the relations of those who might be killed. But it was Washington's brilliant exploit that turned the scale, and large numbers of recruits presented themselves as the news of Trenton was passed round the countryside.

At the close of the year a subsidiary operation was undertaken against Rhode Island. It was the principal station of the enemy's naval force, and the swarms of privateers now in commission were taking a heavy toll of British shipping. Howe selected Clinton for the command of the expeditionary force of 7,000 British and Hessian troops. A naval force, consisting of six 50-gun ships and six frigates, under the command of Sir Peter Parker, accompanied the expedition. The troops were successfully landed on the 7th of December, and Newport, the capital of the island, was occupied. A number of privateers slipped their cables and retreated up the river to Providence where they were blockaded in, and Parker's frigates captured several more as they came in from cruising. The acquisition of this base was of considerable importance as it gave the British fleet a safe harbour in a good strategic position for coastal operations. Howe described the capture as 'an event which I esteem of great importance towards a more speedy termination of the unhappy contest maintained by the deluded people of this continent.'<sup>1</sup>

1776  
Dec. 7

But the year 1776 came to an end with little to comfort either the commanders in America or the Home Government. Carleton had cleared the enemy out of Canada, but had met his match in Benedict Arnold, and had accomplished much less than he had set out to do. Howe had lost nearly all he had gained, and his retreat had done much to hearten and strengthen the enemy, whilst Parker and Clinton had been foiled in the diversionary operation. Indeed the occupation of Rhode Island was the only success.

We can find much excuse for Carleton's lack of success. Both sides extemporised squadrons for the command of the waterways. Douglas and Arnold were both first-class leaders, but the former had to compete with the herculean task of literally carrying his

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Eagle, New York, December 22, 1776.'

squadron overland, 'terraqueous warfare' as he called it,<sup>1</sup> and time, that all important factor in war, turned the scale against him. General Howe was severely criticised for being easy-going, for not pressing on when victory was within his grasp, and for bad generalship when he scattered his army into winter quarters. But we should remember in his favour that he was fighting with one hand behind his back, that he was not only a general conducting a campaign, but also a Peace Commissioner. His conduct of these early operations shows that, unlike many senior officers of the day, he appreciated the value of co-operation with the fleet, and the mobility the fleet could give to the army. The diversionary operation in the South failed from two causes: ignorance of the depth of water at the ford, and failure to appreciate that a few cannon mounted on shore behind well-constructed works are a match for a hundred cannon mounted on such massive and vulnerable targets as ships at anchor.

Like his predecessors, Lord Howe was continually worried by Admiralty interference. In reply to one of the many letters asking what he was doing, he wrote: 'You mention Their Lordships' reliance that the ships will be kept in constant employment. I conceive from thence, that they will expect to receive some report from me touching suitable disposition of the ships for effecting the intended restraint upon the trade of the Rebellious Colonies. It is with great concern that I am still unable to make a satisfactory return. Tho' I conceive it is not from the numbers in either profession that a true judgment of the proportion they should bear to each other is to be deduced. But from the nature of the service to be carried on, the country and communications; seeing that from ships must be provided practised men to be employed in boats, for landing with the requisite expedition, and transporting the troops, baggage and artillery; and where water carriage is so much in question, the means also of intercepting the enemy's supplies, besides the protection of transports, on which the existence of the army has depended, so far as the operations of this campaign have hitherto advanced.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Douglas's Despatch, '*Isis*, Quebec, August 10, 1776.'

<sup>2</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, New York, September 18, 1776.'

1776 First Graves, then Shuldham, then Howe—all wrote home in the same strain ; all explained clearly that the task of the North American fleet was an extremely onerous one. But it was never realised in London.

Howe was delighted with the conduct of the personnel during the long drawn out amphibious operations. ' It is incumbent on me to represent to Their Lordships on this occasion, and I cannot too pointedly express, the unabating perseverance and alacrity with which the several classes of officers and seamen of the ships of war and transports have supported a long attendance and unusual degree of fatigue consequent of these different movements of the Army.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, ' *Eagle*, New York, November 23, 1776.'

## CHAPTER V

### THE DISJOINTED OPERATIONS OF 1777 IN NORTH AMERICA

PARLIAMENT assembled in October 1776. The King's speech 1776 expressed satisfaction at the result of Carleton's operations and the hope that all parties would now work together for a common end.

'One great advantage, however, will be derived from the object of the rebels being openly avowed. . . . We shall have unanimity at home founded on the general conviction of the justice and security of our measures.' But the Opposition were in no frame of mind to allow the Government measures to pass without criticism, and, with such men as Fox among their number, the course of business was seriously impeded. There was also this passage in the speech which may have had a soothing effect, but was most misleading: 'I continue to receive assurances of amity from the several Courts of Europe.'

The Declaration of Independence had placed the international dealings of Congress on a different footing, and, though France hesitated as yet to show her hand, American privateers were using her harbours, both in Europe and the West Indies, not only for shelter but as anchorages for their prizes. In addition to this passive assistance, large gifts of arms, cannon, and munitions were finding their way from France to the American army. French statesmen were at the cross-roads, and Europe and America were anxiously waiting for a declaration of policy. Whilst Turgot, the Minister of Finance, held that the interests of his country would be best served if Great Britain succeeded in quelling the insurrection, Vergennes, the Foreign Minister, pressed more bellicose views on his colleagues. Like many other Frenchmen,

1776 he saw in the embarrassment of the old enemy across the Channel the opportunity of wiping out the defeats of the Seven Years War. Thanks to these divided counsels British Ministers still had a short time to devote all their energies to the war in North America.

The Government obtained an increased vote for the Services, but in the opinion of many the vote for the military establishments still fell far short of requirements. Sixteen sail of the line were ordered to be commissioned, and Letters of Marque were issued to the masters of private vessels as a counter-measure to the enemy's privateering operations which were now causing heavy loss. An even more insidious enemy than these privateers appeared in December when a paid agent set fire to the rope-walk at Portsmouth Dockyard.

The campaign of 1777 is of absorbing interest, not only because the tragic fate of the Northern army at Saratoga had the most far-reaching results, but also because that disaster was due to the faulty inception of the operations. We can well spend a few moments in examining the cause of the failure.

Nov. General Howe's original proposals for the campaign were contained in a letter to Germain which left New York on the 30th of November, 1776 :—

' 1st. An offensive army of 10,000 rank and file to act on the side of Rhode Island, by taking possession of Providence, penetrating from there into the country towards Boston, and if possible to reduce that town.

' Two thousand men to be left for the defence of Rhode Island and for making small incursions under the protection of the shipping from the coast of Connecticut. This army to be commanded by Lieutenant-General Clinton.

' 2nd. An offensive army in the province of New York to move up the North River to Albany, to consist of not less than 10,000 men, and 5,000 for the defence of New York and adjacent parts.

' 3rd. A defensive army of 8,000 men to cover South Jersey and to keep the Southern army in check by giving a jealousy to Philadelphia, which I would prepare to attack in the autumn as

well as Virginia, provided the success of the other operations will admit of an adequate force to be sent against that province. 1777

'South Carolina and Georgia must be the objects of the winter, but to complete this plan not less than ten ships of the line will be absolutely requisite, and a reinforcement of troops to the amount of 15,000 rank and file.'<sup>1</sup>

Germain's answer was dated the 14th of January, 1777. He said he would lay the plans before the King, but that he was 'really alarmed' at the request for 15,000 reinforcements and could only find 8,000.

By the 20th of December Howe had changed his mind, owing to reports that the possession of Philadelphia would have a very definite effect on the large population wavering between allegiance to Congress and allegiance to the King, and he wrote to Germain proposing that the main operation should be against Philadelphia and the operations against Boston should be suspended. 1776 Dec. 20

This letter was answered by Germain on the 3rd of March. He informed Howe that the King approved of the Philadelphia proposal, but added his regret that he could only send a reinforcement of 3,000 men instead of the 8,000 promised in his previous letter. He also stated that the King wished a 'warm diversion' to take place in Massachusetts Bay and New Hampshire.<sup>2</sup> And so for a moment we leave Howe with his main operation against Philadelphia approved, but diversions recommended, and the hoped for reinforcements of 15,000 men cut down to 3,000. 1777 Mar. 3

In the meantime, Burgoyne, who had returned home during the winter, submitted a plan for the further operations of the force in Canada. He proposed that the main body should advance to the Hudson via Lake George or South River, whilst a small force worked from Oswego on Lake Ontario down the Mohawk River as a diversion. An essential feature of his plan was that the General should have the option of moving eastward from Ticonderoga to co-operate with the Rhode Island force, or embarking if necessary and rejoining Howe by sea.

These proposals were approved in principle, and Germain

<sup>1</sup> Howe to Germain, November 30, 1776 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Germain to Howe, March 3, 1777 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

1777  
Mar. 26 wrote to Carleton on the 26th of March informing him that, whilst 3,000 men were to be retained under his command for the defence of Canada, Burgoyne, his junior, would take command of the main body and force his way to Albany whilst Colonel St. Leger operated with a small force on the Mohawk River as a diversion. The principal object was stated to be 'junction with Howe' without allowing any latitude to move eastward, as in Burgoyne's own plan.<sup>1</sup> This letter is remarkable for its minute detail, and Carleton, who, like all soldiers, distrusted Germain, must have resented the lack of confidence shown in him.

Howe, on receiving Germain's letter of the 3rd of March, which told him of the scanty reinforcements he might expect, decided to make use of the mobility the fleet gave him, and move his whole army by sea for the invasion of Pennsylvania. He accordingly wrote to Germain informing him of this change of plan, and also to Carleton warning him that he could not assist the Northern operations as he would require all his force for his own plans. Germain received this letter, and a copy of the letter to Carleton, just after Burgoyne had sailed. But he took no action to prevent the impending disaster beyond writing to Howe that: 'His Majesty trusts that your plans will be executed in time for you to co-operate with the army to proceed from Canada.'<sup>2</sup> This only reached Howe when he was in the Chesapeake. The result of these orders, proposals, and counter-proposals was that Burgoyne received definite orders to advance southwards from Ticonderoga to meet Howe whose proposals to move South also had been approved. The operations were doomed to failure before a shot was fired.

May 6 Burgoyne arrived at Quebec on the 6th of May with a fleet of transports, and immediately went up river to Montreal, where the army was divided into three bodies.

Carleton retained a force of 3,400 men for the defence of Canada, whilst Burgoyne took command of the main body 7,300 strong, and Colonel St. Leger was given 650 men and some Indians to form the diversionary force. Captain Douglas had not been

<sup>1</sup> Germain to Carleton, March 26, 1777 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Germain to Howe, May 18, 1777 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

idle during the winter, and the necessary ships for escorting and conveying the army across the lake had been collected. The main body arrived safely at Crown Point, and there Burgoyne issued this order: 'The army embarks to-morrow to approach the enemy. The services required of this particular expedition are critical and conspicuous. During our progress occasions may occur in which nor difficulty, nor labour, nor life are to be regarded. This army must not retreat.' The enemy in the meanwhile had taken up a strong position at Ticonderoga, and between Ticonderoga and Fort Independence, on the opposite side of the river, had built a very strong bridge of wood, backed by chains, with a boom to complete the barrier across the water.

The composition of the British flotilla was as follows:—

26-gun ship <i>Royal George</i> .	44 gunboats
22 „ „ <i>Inflexible</i> .	4 large provision vessels.
14 „ schooner <i>Maria</i> .	23 long boats for provisions.
14 „ ketch <i>Thunderer</i> .	3 twelve-oared barges.
12 „ schooner <i>Carleton</i> .	26 cutters.
20 „ brig <i>Washington</i> .	260 batteaux.
8 „ sloop <i>Lee</i> .	10 flat-bottomed boats.
9 „ hoy <i>Royal Convert</i> .	
7 „ sloop <i>Jersey</i> .	

Burgoyne began his advance early in July, part of his army moving along the east bank of the waterway and part along the west bank, whilst the *Inflexible*, *Royal George*, and gunboats anchored just out of range of the enemy's batteries. The British force eventually took up positions which practically invested the fort, and General St. Clair, the Commandant, after calling a council-of-war, resolved to retire and spike the guns before his retreat was cut off. July

The only line of retreat for the water-borne stores was by the South River, and on the 6th of July part of the garrison embarked in boats and made for Skenesborough, escorted by armed galleys. The remainder marched inland via Castleton to the same place. July 6  
Burgoyne then called on the Lake Squadron to assist, and Commodore Lutwidge, Douglas's second in command, ordered the



1777 gunboats to cut through the boom. After an hour's work a passage was made sufficiently wide for the larger vessels to pass, and Burgoyne, with the fleet, pushed on towards Skenesborough, where the enemy flotilla was attacked and five vessels destroyed.

In the meanwhile, Brigadier-General Fraser had started off in pursuit of the enemy's column which was marching to Castleton. July 7 He came up with the rearguard on the 7th, and next day attacked the enemy, who were well posted and twice his strength. There was some very hard fighting, but, when the British force was reinforced by the arrival of German troops under General Riedesel, the enemy gave way and fled, leaving 200 dead and 200 prisoners. They then retreated to Fort Edward on the Hudson River, felling trees, destroying bridges, and placing obstructions in Wood Creek as they went.

Burgoyne rested his tired troops for two days before commencing the laborious work of clearing a way to the South. Fallen trees and rocks in the Creek had to be removed, and no fewer than forty new bridges had to be constructed, with the result that the British force took twenty days to march the twenty miles from Skenesborough to Fort Edward. General Schuyler, who had taken over command of the American troops, was not yet prepared to fight, and had retired to Stillwater by the time Burgoyne reached Fort Edward.

At Fort Edward Burgoyne began to experience difficulty in supplying his army. Horses that had been ordered had not arrived; he had been unable to collect ox-teams from the countryside; his force was too weak to allow of detachments to form a secure line of communications to Lake George; and heavy rains added to all his other difficulties. In this quandary he received intelligence that St. Leger's force had arrived at Fort Stanwix, and realised that he must continue his advance if the diversionary operation was to have any effect in his favour.

Provisions had to be obtained, and he ordered a German officer, Colonel Baum, to take 500 men and attempt to surprise the garrison at Bennington, where the enemy had large stores of provisions and many horses. It was a rash move to send such



MAP IV

1777 a small force into the enemy's country, but Burgoyne was assured that the country-folk were loyal.

Instead of surprising the enemy, Baum soon found himself surrounded, and, after a hard fight, was compelled to surrender. A like fate met another party of 500 German troops who marched to Baum's assistance.

Aug. 3 This was a severe blow to Burgoyne, and was soon followed by bad news from the diversionary column. St. Leger had arrived opposite Fort Stanwix on the 3rd of August. He had at once commenced siege operations, but his guns were very small and the operations were slow and laborious. Meanwhile, Benedict Arnold, who had ruined Carleton's campaign the year before, was working up the Mohawk with 1,200 volunteers. When still some way from the Fort he arranged for intelligence to be conveyed to the British camp that a big force was advancing to the relief of the garrison. This had the desired result, and St. Leger's Indians, whose courage and loyalty had always been doubtful, first mutinied and then deserted. With his force shorn of a great part of its strength, St. Leger had no choice but to raise the siege and retire to Oswego.

It had been a gallant effort with an inadequate force and insufficient guns.

It can be seen from his letters that Burgoyne at this time thought it undesirable to advance further from his line of supplies, but he looked on his orders as imperative, and, after collecting provisions, started once more on his weary march.

Sept. 19 On the 19th of September he came up with the enemy, who were now commanded by General Gates, near Stillwater. Their position had been carefully prepared, and a fierce battle took place which lasted from 2 P.M. till sunset. Burgoyne wrested the position from the enemy at the price of 500 casualties, and Gates retired a short distance and fortified a new line. Once again Benedict Arnold, acting as second in command to Gates, proved himself a skilled commander in the field.

In the meanwhile, Burgoyne's weak line of communications had been attacked. Three detachments of 500 men each had raided the posts on the Lake and captured or destroyed 150

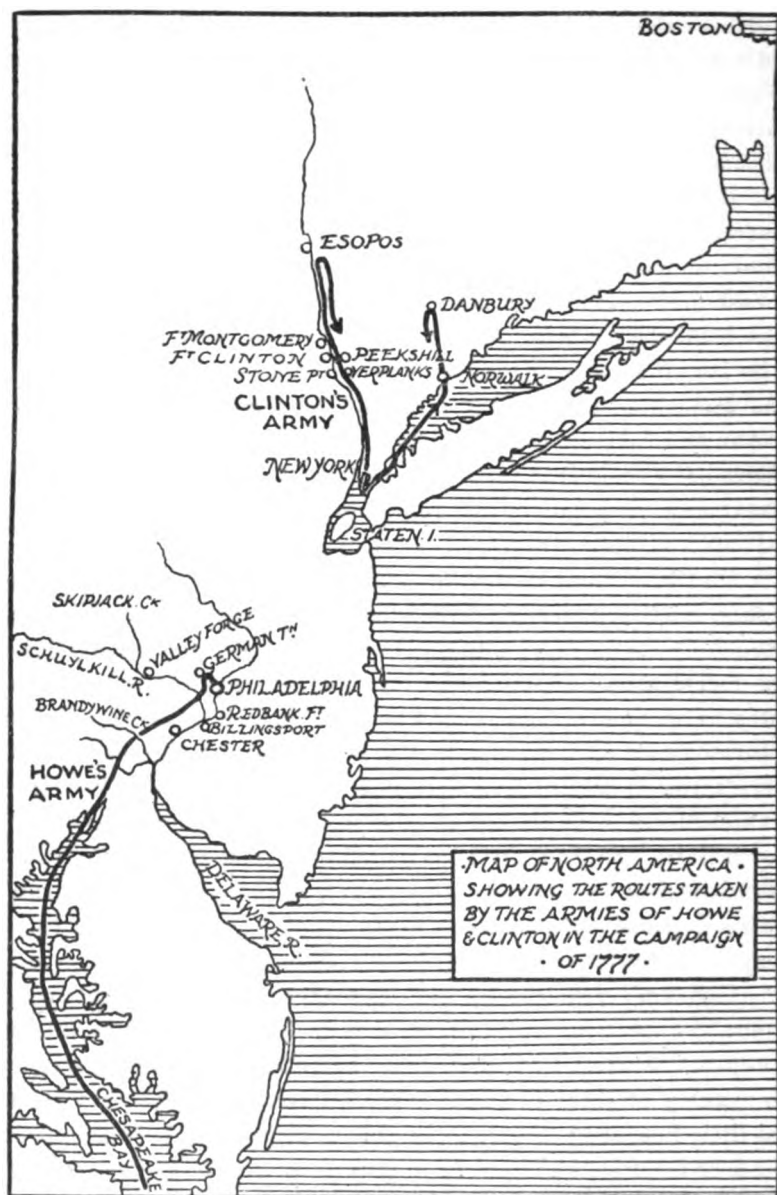
bateaux, several gunboats and other watercraft. Faced by this further calamity, Burgoyne must have considered the advisability of retreating despite his orders, but a message from General Clinton arrived on the 21st informing him that he intended to attack Fort Montgomery on the Hudson on the 24th, and this decided him to entrench his army and wait. 1777  
Sept. 21

He was in a most unenviable position. The enemy were daily increasing in numbers. Retreat to Canada was no longer easy, and, even if feasible, would free Gates to join forces with Washington. His men were on short rations, and it was very doubtful if Clinton's force could act in time to assist him. On the 7th of October, having received no further news from Clinton, he decided to attack, but after a hard fight was compelled to retire and take up a new position. It was once again the skill of Benedict Arnold that turned the scale in favour of the Americans. Next day Burgoyne retired to Saratoga, leaving a large number of sick and wounded behind. Oct. 7

On the morning of the 9th, what remained of the British force found itself practically surrounded. Burgoyne was still waiting hopefully for news of Clinton, but none came, and on the 15th he called a Council of War, which decided that the only course was to surrender. There was little else to be done when 8,500 starving men were surrounded by 16,000 well-conditioned troops. The terms of capitulation were settled on the 17th, and the force marched out with the honours of war. By the terms arranged with Gates, the troops were to march to Boston and be shipped to England, but the unfortunate remnants of that gallant little army were destined to experience many trials at the hands of their captors before they saw their homes again. Oct. 9  
Oct. 15  
Oct. 17

Carleton's remarks on the surrender at Saratoga are very apt: 'This unfortunate event, it is to be hoped, will in future prevent Ministers from pretending to direct operations of war in a country at three thousand miles distance, of which they have so little knowledge as not to be able to distinguish between good, bad, or interested advices, or to give positive orders upon matters which, from their nature, are ever on the change.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carleton to Burgoyne, November 17, 1777.



MAP V

The concurrent operations of the Main Force fill a rather brighter page of history. During the winter many skirmishes took place between foraging parties from the two armies ; but the only two operations of importance were those against Peekskill and Danbury, where Washington had constructed depôts for stores and munitions. For the operations against Peekskill 500 men were sent up the river in transports escorted by a frigate. A large quantity of stores was destroyed, but no fighting took place as the enemy evacuated their positions. For the operations against Danbury the troops were again embarked in transports and sailed on the 23rd of April, escorted by the *Eagle* (fifty guns) and two sloops. After disembarking at Norwalk the force marched north to Danbury where a large quantity of stores was destroyed. The enemy in the meantime had made preparations to attack on the return march, and the force had to fight their way back to the transports, losing over 300 killed and wounded. 1777 April 23

Washington's army had been sadly reduced during the winter, and if Howe had known the true state of affairs he could probably have ended the campaign with one blow. But as the year advanced, the efforts of Congress bore fruit, and the American army steadily increased in numbers. The equipment of recruits presented many difficulties, which were partly removed when two ships arrived in March at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, fully loaded with arms, ammunition, and clothing. These valuable cargoes had been put on board at Nantes through the agency of the indefatigable Franklin. By June Washington felt strong enough to advance, and took up a position near Middlebrook with an army approximately 8,000 strong. June

Storeships and recruits for Howe's army had also arrived from England, and on the 13th of June he decided to move, but soon found the enemy's positions too strong to attack. He then attempted to draw Washington from his stronghold by feigning to retreat, and threw a bridge across to Staten Island. Washington took the bait, and moved out to take the offensive. On the 26th Howe turned on his enemy, and, after some fighting, Washington once more withdrew to his old positions. June 26

Howe then decided to proceed with his project for the capture

1777 of Philadelphia, and embarked about 14,000 men in transports, leaving about 9,000 under Clinton for the protection of New York. The seven battalions, under General Pigot, who were occupying Rhode Island, were left intact.

Lord Howe arranged to escort the transports with five of the line and a number of frigates and sloops. He also detached a squadron under Sir Peter Parker for service at Rhode Island, and a small squadron under Hotham to co-operate with Clinton at New York. The Philadelphia expedition of 267 ships eventually  
 July 23 sailed on the 23rd of July, and its departure caused Washington great anxiety. His enemy had disappeared, and he could not tell where he would reappear again; it might be Boston, the Hudson River, the Delaware, the Chesapeake or Charleston. Once embarked in transports his enemy possessed a mobility and power to surprise which was denied him. Washington had information of Burgoyne's plans, and probably concluded that Howe's intention was to move up the Hudson. His surprise  
 Aug. 22 must have been great when, on the 22nd of August, he heard that the transports were in Chesapeake Bay. He was too good a General to let slip the opportunity presented by the faulty British plans, and at once gave orders for the strengthening of the army operating against Burgoyne, with the result already described. He himself crossed the Delaware and marched south to oppose Howe.

— A last-minute change of plan, combined with a spell of bad weather, had robbed Howe's army of its power to effect a surprise landing. The General sailed with the intention of landing in the Delaware, as he did not wish to be too far to the southward if Washington marched northward against Burgoyne.

July 31 The expedition arrived off the Delaware on the 31st of July, and time was still in its favour, but the Admiral advised against landing as the enemy were reported to have placed large obstructions in the river. It is difficult to understand why this was not discovered before the fleet left Sandy Hook. A frigate, sloop, or even a small coasting vessel could have carried out a reconnaissance without raising suspicion. The result of this oversight was far-reaching. The fleet made sail for the Ches-

peake, but owing to calms and contrary winds did not arrive there 1777  
till the 14th of August, and the landing of the army was not Aug. 14  
completed until the 25th, nearly a month after sailing from New Aug. 25  
York.

On the 28th the army advanced in two columns under Corn- Aug. 28  
wallis and Knyphausen, and soon fell in with Washington's  
outposts, who retired. By the 10th of September Howe had Sept. 10  
reached a point a few miles from Brandywine Creek, where  
Washington had taken up a strong position. The battle which  
took place on the following day reflected much credit on Howe.  
He won the day by good generalship, and was only robbed of a  
complete victory by darkness coming on in time for Washington  
to effect his retreat. The American army left behind about 1,000  
killed and prisoners. The retreat continued as far as the Schuyl-  
kill River, where a stand was again made.

The crossing of the river presented difficulties, but Howe  
manœuvred to draw Washington up-river, and then crossed  
unopposed lower down. He then marched to Philadelphia, which  
was entered on the 25th. Sept. 25

Washington came back to the attack a week later. Having  
received considerable reinforcements, he attempted a surprise  
attack on the British force at Germantown. Thick fog covered  
the ground, and after a severe fight, which lasted for two and a  
half hours, the Americans retired.

Lord Howe, after hearing of the success at Brandywine Creek,  
decided to 'move the fleet round to a proper anchorage for pre-  
serving a free communication with the army,'<sup>1</sup> and sailed for the  
Delaware. After a stormy voyage he anchored off Newcastle on  
the 4th of October, and two days later moved up to Chester. Oct. 4  
But it was impossible for the store ships and transports to work  
up the river until the obstructions and floating batteries between  
the small forts at Mud Island and Red Bank had been removed.

To Captain Hamond of the *Roebuck* fell the task of cutting  
through the river obstructions at Billingsport, and he eventually  
succeeded though harassed by small enemy gunboats and  
fireships.

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Eagle, Delaware, October 25, 1777.'



1777 First attempts to capture Red Bank Fort, which were undertaken by a body of troops working in conjunction with four frigates under Captain Reynolds, ended in failure. The defenders made the best use of a strong position, and drove off the land attack with heavy loss, whilst two of the frigates grounded, owing 'to a change in the course of the river caused by the obstructions having altered the channel.'<sup>1</sup>

The operations against Mud Island Fort met with better success. The *Vigilant*, mounting sixteen 24-pdrs., a hulk with three 24-pdrs., and three frigates moved up the river and opened a heavy bombardment in conjunction with a bombardment by land batteries, and the enemy evacuated the fort during the night. Red Bank Fort was abandoned shortly afterwards, and the enemy rivercraft, deprived of their only protected anchorage, attempted Oct. 25 to pass up-river on the night of the 25th, but were intercepted by a frigate, and, with the exception of four galleys, were destroyed or captured.

As a result of these combined operations transports and store ships for the supply of the army were able to move up the river. Early in December Washington again put his army into Dec. 4 motion, and on the 4th Howe moved out to meet him, but, though several skirmishes took place, there was no serious engagement. Howe then went into winter quarters at Philadelphia, and Washington retired to Valley Forge.

Washington's army during the winter suffered great hardships. In a letter to Congress he described his men as 'naked and distressed on a cold bleak hill . . . sleeping under frost and snow without clothes or blankets.' His army steadily dwindled, starvation led to mutiny, and to add to his difficulties he knew that the other American Generals were intriguing against him. But Howe made no attempt to take advantage of his enemy's parlous condition. He had written home in October asking to be relieved. 'From the little attention, My Lord, given to my recommendations since the commencement of my command, I am led to hope I may be relieved from this very painful service wherein I have not the good fortune to enjoy the necessary con-

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Eagle, Delaware, October 25, 1777.'

fidence and support of my superiors, but which I conclude will be extended to Sir H. Clinton, my presumptive successor.' <sup>1</sup> 1777

His inactivity may have been caused by a disinclination to embark on operations in the depth of winter when he was about to be relieved. He was naturally an indolent man, and perhaps glad of a reasonable excuse. It is not so easy to find excuse for the general slackness that he allowed to permeate his army whilst they were quartered at Philadelphia.

He was very pleased with the work of the Navy, and wrote to the Admiral: 'I cannot too highly acknowledge the signal services the Army has received from the perseverance and activity of the officers and seamen under your Lordship's command since the King's troops entered Philadelphia.' <sup>2</sup>

With the approach of winter the Admiral had to make fresh dispositions, as 'there was no sufficient retreat in the Delaware for the big ships.' <sup>3</sup> He decided to leave Captain Hamond in command of the light forces, and with the remainder sail for Rhode Island, 'as the floating ice which subsists with little intermission in the earlier part of the year within the Port of New York does not admit of ships being continued there in safety.' <sup>4</sup> Before leaving he received a letter from the Admiralty in which Their Lordships expressed surprise that certain American privateers had escaped from Boston and other ports. He replied: 'I have always conceived the first object of my instructions to be for co-operating with the army. Until the army is competent to ensure their communication, deficiency must be furnished from the fleet.

'I understand I am admonished by the tenor of your said letter. Their Lordships, however, adverting to the nautic circumstances of the case, will, I trust, not deem me reprehensible on that account.' <sup>5</sup>

The fleet cleared from the Delaware on the 29th of December,

<sup>1</sup> Howe to Germain, 'October 12, 1777, Philadelphia' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Sir W. Howe to Lord Howe, 'Philadelphia, November 17, 1777.'

<sup>3</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, Delaware, November 23, 1777.'

<sup>4</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, Rhode Island, January 5, 1778.'

<sup>5</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, Delaware, December 10, 1777.'

1778 and anchored at Rhode Island on the 2nd of January. Many months of active service had reduced the efficiency of the ships. The *Centurion*, *Cerberus*, and *Tartar* were 'much out of condition,' the number of sick had 'much increased from the scarcity of vegetable refreshments,' and 'many of the ships were unequal in their condition to the constant employment on which they were necessarily engaged.'<sup>1</sup>

The operations of the troops based on New York can be described in a few words. Their principal charge was the protection of the town and district. 'The instructions I have taken the liberty of leaving with Sir Henry Clinton are to be upon the defensive, with power to act otherwise according to concurrent circumstances, without losing sight of the principal object in the security of the place, which I hope may be approved.'<sup>2</sup> Clinton could not take advantage of Howe's permission to 'act otherwise' unless his army was considerably reinforced, and, until the year was well advanced, he had to be content with minor operations to prevent the enemy making detachments to Washington or Gates. About 3,000 recruits arrived from England on the 25th of September, and he then felt strong enough to take the offensive. His first object was the capture of Forts Montgomery and Clinton, which commanded the river navigation. Hotham organised the flotilla, which consisted of boats to carry about 1,000 men, and a number of transports. Under escort of a small squadron commanded by Sir James Wallace, the force first moved up-river to Verplanks Point. From there they crossed the river to Stony Point, whilst the frigates went higher up to co-operate in the attack on Fort Montgomery.

1777  
Sept. 25

The troops, who were organised in two columns, arrived at their objectives simultaneously after a very severe march. Fort Montgomery soon fell, but Fort Clinton was only taken after very hard fighting. The wind was blowing down-river, and the enemy, sooner than let their fleet fall into Clinton's hands, set fire to two frigates (thirty and thirty-six guns), two galleys and twenty-eight smaller vessels. They also left behind a great quantity of warlike

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, Rhode Island, January 5, 1778.'

<sup>2</sup> Howe to Germain, 'July 7, 1777, New York' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

stores, including a boom chain, which was sent to England and afterwards used at Gibraltar. 1777

After this success, the troops re-embarked and moved up-river, escorted by Wallace's galleys and armed vessels. The principal object was 'to facilitate the motions (whatever they may be) of the Northern Army, and by the alarm which it will occasion to cause a diversion in their favour.'<sup>1</sup>

The flotilla advanced up-river, destroying river-craft and stores, as far as Esopus, but there news was received that all was not well with Burgoyne's army. 'By all our information,' wrote Wallace, 'I am afraid General Burgoyne is retreated if not worse.'<sup>2</sup> The remnants of Burgoyne's army had, in fact, marched out of their camp at Saratoga two days before Clinton and Wallace arrived at Esopus.

There was nothing to be done but return down-river. 'It is intended,' wrote Hotham, 'to evacuate everything up the river, as Sir Henry Clinton for the defence of this place will now stand in need of every man left under his command.'<sup>3</sup>

The results of the campaign of 1777 fell far short of expectations. Its inception was faulty, and the orders resulted in three British armies operating in an enemy country with very little reference to one another's movements. There was no concentration, co-operation, or clearly defined object. Holding the command of the sea lines of communication, the British possessed a power of mobility and surprise denied to their enemy, but this advantage was not made use of, and Washington, working on interior lines, was able to counter the disjointed attacks.

Those at home may have gleaned some comfort from Howe's and Clinton's despatches. British armies were firmly established at Philadelphia and New York, Washington's army was in sore straits, and a great quantity of warlike stores had been destroyed during the operations.

But to the hard-pressed Americans, to France in a bellicose

<sup>1</sup> Hotham to Howe, 'Preston, off Peek's Kill Creek, October 15, 1777.'

<sup>2</sup> Wallace to Hotham, 'Gallies and armed vessels off Esopus Creek, October 17, 1777.'

<sup>3</sup> Hotham to Howe, 'New York, October 21, 1777.'

1777 mood, to Spain indolent but revengeful, such success as could be credited to Howe's army became of small relative significance when the news filtered through that a British army had surrendered. The disaster at Saratoga was to change the whole course of the war. It was to prove the signal to the old enemy across the Channel who had been biding his time to spring. It was to act as a clarion call to thousands of waverers in America.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ENTRY OF FRANCE, 1778

DURING the first three years the conduct of the war had presented 1777 no special difficulties to the Ministers responsible for the operations of the forces. The finding of reinforcements for the army in America had been their sole preoccupation. The sea line of communication to that army was 4,000 miles long, but its control had not been seriously challenged. Though the activity of the enemy's small craft had compelled the adoption of a convoy and escort system, troop transports and store ships had sailed with little fear of not arriving at their destination. This happy state of affairs came to an end early in 1778 when a new and powerful enemy entered the fray. Not only was the sea line of communications threatened, but the Government was faced with the possibility of losing far more than the American colonies, and was even haunted by the spectre of invasion.

Parliament met in November before the news of Saratoga had Nov. been received. The policy outlined in the King's Speech was to keep up the military establishment to its 'present strength,' but 'when the armaments of France and Spain continue,' to increase the naval establishment.

Long and violent debates took place. Chatham, in the House of Lords, launched an attack on the Government. He asserted that British merchant ships were destitute of protection, that there were not above 4,000 troops in Britain, and that only twenty ships of the line were manned and fit for service. He then drew attention to the powerful navies of France and Spain and the large numbers of troops quartered on their coasts, adding that their intentions were known to be hostile.

1777 He was not far wrong, but Sandwich replied that there were forty-two ships of the line in Home waters, thirty-five of which were ready for sea ; that to man the other seven 2,800 ratings were necessary ; that there were six of the line in America, and that, including ships on other stations, the whole naval force available was fifty-four ships of the line and 200 frigates and smaller vessels. From these figures he concluded that England possessed a force superior to that of France and Spain should they combine.

Dec. In December the Secretary of State for the American Department informed the House of Burgoyne's disaster. The finding of reinforcements for the army in America then became the principal concern of the Government.

It was no longer possible to obtain levies from the Continent, as some of the German princes were discouraging recruiting, and others refusing permission for troops to pass through their States. In this quandary the Government turned to its friends in England and Scotland, and they responded nobly. Regiments were raised in Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and also by the Dukes of Hamilton, Argyll, and Atholl, and Lords Seaforth and Macdonald.

But whilst the Government's immediate anxiety was removed, the intentions of France were daily becoming more apparent. It was known that Congress agents, headed by Benjamin Franklin, had been endeavouring to negotiate a Commercial Treaty with France, and that this Treaty had been signed as soon as the news of Saratoga reached Europe. Since then events had moved quickly. When these agents heard that the British Government intended to make a final bid for peace, they used every endeavour to hurry forward the entry of France, as they were afraid the Peace Commissioners might meet with success owing to the large number of waverers in many of the colonies.

1778  
Feb. 6 M. de Sartine, the Minister of Marine, threw all his weight on their side, and a secret Treaty of Alliance was concluded on the 6th of February, the four most interesting articles of which were as follows :—

*Art. 1.* In case war should be declared between France and Great Britain during the course of the existing war between

the United States and England, His Majesty and the said United States will make common cause and will mutually assist each other with their good offices, their advice, and their forces, as is proper between good and faithful allies. 1778

*Art. 2.* The main purpose of the present defensive alliance is to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty, and independence, absolute and unlimited, of the United States both as regards government and commerce.

*Art. 6.* His most Christian Majesty renounces all rights to the island of Bermuda, likewise to any part of the continent of North America which, before the treaty, has been acknowledged as belonging to the Crown of Great Britain or to the United States, formerly called British colonies, or which is now or has been recently under the rule of the King and Crown of Great Britain.

*Art. 8.* Neither of the two parties will conclude peace or a truce with Great Britain without having obtained the formal consent of the other, and they mutually engage not to lay down arms until the Independence of the United States has been formally or tacitly assured by the treaty which will terminate the war.

In February, Lord North brought forward proposals for conciliating the Americans in the form of two Bills, one with respect to taxation, and one to legalise the appointment of Commissioners to treat with the Americans and secure peace. France then threw off the mask, and on the 18th of March the Marquis de Noailles, French Ambassador in London, handed to Lord Weymouth the following declaration :— Feb. Mar. 13

‘ The United States of North America who are in full possession of independence as pronounced by them on the fourth of July, 1776, having proposed to the King to consolidate, by a formal convention, the connection begun to be established between the two nations, the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed a treaty of friendship and commerce, designed to serve as a foundation for their mutual good correspondence.

‘ His Majesty, being determined to cultivate the good understanding subsisting between France and Great Britain, by every means compatible with his dignity, and the good of his subjects, thinks it necessary to make his proceeding known to the Court



1778 of London and to declare at the same time that the contracting parties have paid great attention not to stipulate any exclusive advantages in favour of the French nation ; and that the United States have reserved the liberty of treating with any nation whatever upon the same footing of equality and reciprocity.

‘ In making this communication to the Court of London the King is firmly persuaded he will find new proofs of His Majesty’s constant and sincere disposition for peace ; and that His Britannic Majesty, animated by the same sentiments, will equally avoid everything that may alter their good harmony ; and that he will particularly take effectual measures to prevent the commerce between His Majesty’s subjects and the United States of North America from being interrupted and to cause all the usages received between commercial nations to be, in this respect, observed and all those rules which can be said to subsist between the two Crowns of France and Great Britain.

‘ In this just confidence the undersigned Ambassador thinks it superfluous to acquaint the British Minister, that, the King his master being determined to protect effectually the lawful commerce of his subjects and to maintain the dignity of his flag, His Majesty has, in consequence, taken eventual measures in concert with the United States of North America.’

This pleasantly worded document meant war, and the King at once sent orders to the British Ambassador, Lord Stormont, to withdraw from the French Court.

The British Government was now faced with an entirely new and difficult problem which could only be solved by the use of sound strategy and the marshalling of every available ship and man. How the situation was coped with will be described in due course, but we must first enquire into the strength of the new and formidable forces that were being organised on the other side of the Channel.

Choiseul, the adroit and able Minister, whose grandiose plan for the invasion of England in the last year of the Seven Years War had been brought to nought by the defection of Spain, appreciated what sea power had done for England, and the renaissance of the French Navy may be said to have begun after

the Battle of Quiberon Bay. Under his guidance, popular feeling was skilfully aroused, discipline was restored, and building begun, with the result that about forty ships of the line were in commission before the end of the Seven Years War. During the next eight years Choiseul worked hard to increase the number of ships, fill up the arsenals and storehouses, and train the fleet for war. His immediate successors were de Boynes and Turgot, whose terms of office were not marked by anything of special interest. 1763

Sartine became Minister of Marine in 1776. Though his previous service had been as Lieutenant-General of Police, he brought to bear his gift for organisation to continue the work of Choiseul, and he in turn was succeeded by de Castries, whom French writers describe as the greatest Minister of Marine since Colbert. At the age of fifteen Castries had fought at the siege of Prague. Promoted Lieutenant-General for brilliant work in the Seven Years War, he was in command of the operations that resulted in the relief of Wesel in 1760 and the defeat of the Prince of Brunswick at Clostercamp. De Malouet, discussing his appointment, wrote: 'De Castries, as strange to the Navy as Sartine, came there with much more understanding and military ideas.' 1776

These two men, who had no knowledge of sea warfare, were responsible for the building up of the French Navy, and, when war broke out, for the method of its employment. The prior task they did well, and in 1778 France possessed sixty-three ships of the line, of sixty-four guns and above, in efficient condition, and 67,000 trained men. Their ability to deal with the second task can be judged as the story of the war is unfolded, but if we are to appreciate their work, we must know something of the machinery that existed for ordering maritime operations. 1778

The central administration of the Minister of Marine consisted of seven departments:—

- (1) Secretariat ; (2) Personnel ; (3) Ports and Dockyards ;
- (4) Commerce ; (5) Colonial ; (6) Finance ; (7) Charts.

There was thus no department charged exclusively with the drafting of war plans, no naval staff. But there was an arrangement by which the department of Ports and Dockyards functioned

1778 as a war staff in addition to its other duties. This can be seen from the following report on the duties of that Division, dated January 1781 :—

‘The formation of statements relating to the equipment of the ports, orders for construction, repairs, refits . . . commissioning and paying off . . . Naval Councils and *War Instructions*.’

In 1777 Sartine chose a certain Chevalier de Fleurieu as Head of the Department, and it fell to his lot to prepare the operational plans for the war. Fleurieu as a young man had been present at Galissonière’s action with Byng and at La Clue’s action with Boscawen, but in recent years had devoted himself to studying astronomy and navigation. During 1768 and 1769 he was employed on scientific work in the Atlantic, which supplied him with the data for a nautical treatise of some importance. This led to his appointment as Head of the Chart Department, where he remained until Sartine selected him for the larger task. The proposals and plans produced by this remarkable man will appear from time to time in this history.

The training for war of this remodelled fleet is worthy of close attention.

The leading authority on naval tactics was Bizet de Morogues, who had served both in the army and the navy. He was a strong candidate for the post of Minister of Marine when Choiseul retired. He was a man of great personality and knowledge, and between 1737 and 1763 wrote many technical publications on explosives, ship construction, and the casting of guns.

In anything he taught he could hardly escape the influence of Père Hoste, who, when professor of mathematics at Toulon, had published in 1696 a book entitled ‘The Art of Fleets, or a Treatise on Naval Evolution.’ This book, when reprinted in 1727, had been widely read in the French Navy. Hoste took as his text : ‘Without the art of naval evolution a fleet resembles an army of barbarians,’ and developed it into a number of diagrams and descriptions of how to perform certain tactical movements. He recommended bold attacks on an enemy in harbour, saying ‘It is scarcely prudent to make precepts for Admirals ; one must be

content with submitting examples to them.' He also investigated orders of sailing for quick manœuvring. 1727

So far so good, but he then enunciated the theory that there was only one way of fighting an action: 'In an action the fleets range themselves in two lines parallel to one of the two courses when close-hauled. All the ships are at one cable interval,' and added: 'It is to His Britannic Majesty that we owe perfection in this matter.' He was a strong advocate of the rigid battle plan: 'I do not know if I make a mistake when I am persuaded that the good order of a fleet requires that the position and manœuvres of each ship should be exactly determined in all circumstances, so that they are *never free* to choose what they should do.'

As to the surplus ships of the line, he proposed that they should be employed to harass the enemy's rear, or should attempt to sail round to the non-engaged side. But this was only to be allowed when a definite surplus existed.

In 1763 Morogues produced his book on naval tactics and dedicated it to Choiseul. This book became the recognised standard work and had great influence. The following extracts are sufficient to show Morogues' line of thought:— 1763

'Naval Tactics is the art of ranging fleets in convenient order and of regulating their movements.

'On the sea, the fleet which is the less numerous of the two, being able to manœuvre with greater facility, without separating, can often *escape* by taking advantage of night, or of a change of wind. . . . *There are no longer decisive actions at sea.*'

'Thus, true force or superiority at sea consists less in the number of vessels and vivacity in action than in *good order*, the science of manœuvre, the coolness and good demeanour of the captains.'

'Marshal Puysegur said in his memoirs that when two armies are seen moving against each other it is easy to estimate which of the two will gain the victory by observing with what degree of exactness they march. This is perhaps even more true as regards fleets than armies.'

He dealt at some length with retreating actions, and the general purport of his work was that a fleet should be trained

1763 in naval tactics as a means of preservation, and that everything depended on exactitude of disposition and manœuvre.

1765 On the 28th of March, 1765, Choiseul promulgated an Ordinance which contained the Battle Orders for the French Fleet. The influence of Hoste and Morogues can be clearly seen in these orders. The attention of a reader is first directed to defensive formations, which are dealt with at some length. These are followed by instructions for the conduct of captains :—

‘ If a Captain considers that he can take the ship with which he is in action by boarding, he will attempt it, *informing the Admiral by signal at the time.*

‘ No Captain should, for any reason whatsoever, unless his ship is extremely endangered, disabled and in no condition for fighting, leave his position in the line, under pain of *Court Martial.*

‘ A Captain may not either, during the action, leave the line in order to succour a vessel in distress, unless the Admiral signals to him to do so.

‘ His Majesty orders Captains of ships to pay more attention to the defence of their own flagship than to the safety of the ships under their command, His Majesty requiring that these should allow themselves to be sunk rather than that they should abandon the flagship.’

There is much more in the same vein, but these extracts are sufficient to show that officers acting under such orders would be deprived of all initiative, and could not be expected to shoulder the responsibility of individual action, even if they saw that such action might turn the battle in their favour. By these orders ships had to be fought in accordance with a very rigid drill-book, in which no scope was allowed for intelligence or initiative. The effect of this Ordinance on Fleet Commanders can be seen in a letter written by d’Estaing, who held the premier command in the early years of the war :—

‘ If all Captains are perfect at manœuvre, one can guess what they will do, because one will be sure that it will be what they ought to do. The route for each ship is known, the dance is arranged, and if no change of wind or other navigational hap-

pening occurs, things will go passably well. *This is good enough for us, with our present organisation.*<sup>1</sup> 1765

The Minister of Marine, unlike many of his predecessors, was not content to allow these tactical ideas to remain on paper until war broke out. Before Choiseul set his hand to the task of rebuilding the fleet it had been the custom to lay ships up and dispense with the services of the majority of the personnel as soon as peace was signed, but with the rebirth of the Navy it was realised that training at sea was essential for efficiency. 'Evolutionary Squadrons' were formed for the purpose. The first of these squadrons, consisting of three of the line, six frigates and three corvettes, sailed under d'Orvilliers in 1772. 1772

The majority of his orders referred to salutes, administration, and questions of precedence, and training for war was only referred to very briefly. 'His Majesty's intention is that Sieur d'Orvilliers should proceed out of harbour and into the open sea outside the Gulf, in order to exercise the squadrons in different warlike manœuvres and naval evolutions.'

'When the Sieur d'Orvilliers considers that the squadron is sufficiently trained by evolutions at sea, His Majesty's intentions are that he should, if weather conditions allow, approach the coast in order to expend the remainder of the four months of the cruise in the execution, either under sail or at anchor, of all such exercises to which this sort of naval tactics lends itself.' The King further enjoined d'Orvilliers to see that great precision and accuracy were obtained, and records show that he cruised for nearly seven months, but did little in the way of action tactics. Of La Motte-Picquet he wrote: 'He is careful in keeping in his station'; of Latouche-Tréville: 'He has manœuvred very well'; of de Grasse, who had run into his colleagues sometimes: 'His collisions seem to show that there is something lacking in his judgment by eye.'

In 1775 a second evolutionary squadron, composed of frigates and corvettes, was formed under de Guichen. Simple evolutions were attempted for the first two months, and then some ideas of 1775

<sup>1</sup> MSS. of Minister of Marine, G. 145. Quoted by Castox in *Les Idées Militaires du XVIII<sup>me</sup> Siècle*.

1775 du Pavillon, afterwards Chief of Staff to d'Orvilliers at Ushant, were tested, but, as no line-of-battle ships took part, the lessons learnt were of no special value.

At the end of the year, Morogues' son-in-law, Captain Périer de Salvert, submitted a plan for forming a squadron of three ships of the line, nine frigates, and three corvettes, and training them thoroughly for war. His proposals included strategical operations, exercises in concentration, heavy gun-fire at a hulk, squadrons manœuvring against one another, scouting, search operations and landing operations.

Nor did he forget the tactical training of young officers : ' In each ship should be embarked a table five feet square, on which compass cards should be drawn for the moving of little models of ships made for the purpose, so that young officers can learn tactical manœuvres.'

De Salvert was far in advance of his time, and little attention was paid to his recommendations. This can be seen from the  
1776 records of the third evolutionary squadron which sailed in 1776 under du Chaffault. Only simple evolutions were attempted, and no firing practices took place. If de Salvert had been able to persuade his superiors, French sea leaders might have been freed from the mind-destroying doctrine of the day, and an offensive spirit might have replaced the defensive spirit, so carefully inculcated by the writings of ' experts,' the ' Battle Orders,' and the work of the evolutionary squadrons.

Choiseul and his successors worked hard to improve the efficiency of the lower deck ratings, but his endeavours to repress the class feeling amongst the officers met with little success. A passage in Troude's ' Batailles Navales ' shows that this must have been a permanent source of weakness : ' Under Louis XVI the intimacy and fellowship existing between the chief and subordinate led the latter to discuss the orders which were given him. Admiral, Captain, Officers, Midshipmen, ate together ; everything was in common. They " thee-and-thou'd " each other like chums. In handling the ship the inferior gave his opinion, argued : and the chief, irritated, often preferred to yield rather than make enemies.'

It is never an easy task to compare the strength of two fleets. Tables showing relative tonnage, armament, and strength of personnel only touch on the fringe of the matter. But our examination of the potential fighting value of the rival navies has revealed certain definite assets and defects. The British fleet was more numerous on paper, but had been sadly neglected. The Admiralty was experiencing great difficulty in manning the ships, as many of the trained seamen had drifted away uncared for. Many good officers had left the service in disgust, and were beyond recall in foreign countries. Most of the senior officers were involved in politics, and those who belonged to the Opposition were intensely suspicious of the treatment they would receive if they accepted a command. Tactical thought was at a standstill, and officers were still haunted by memories of Matthews' court-martial.

The French fleet, though smaller on paper, was efficiently manned and stored. A spirit of renaissance was present. The personnel was well trained, but the efficiency of the officers was reduced by class feeling. Tactics had received much attention from an academic point of view.

But there was something else that was destined to play a vital part in the war. England could still command the services of men who had won their spurs in the Seven Years War, men who, though they had made little study of the art of war, possessed the will to win. The French Admirals, on the other hand, had never led forces to victory, and peace-time study had implanted in their minds a tactical doctrine that could only produce negative results.

The position of the main bases exercised a considerable influence on the strategic direction of these two fleets. The British dockyards in Europe were situated at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham and Gibraltar. The majority of the French fleet were based on Brest and Toulon. So whilst the British squadrons could collect at a home port without running the gauntlet, a fleet based on Gibraltar could control the French power of concentration in the Mediterranean or on the Atlantic seaboard. Furthermore, a fleet lying in Brest could be blockaded in by a fleet using the Channel ports for shelter in stormy weather and revictualling, provided an adequate number of frigates for inshore

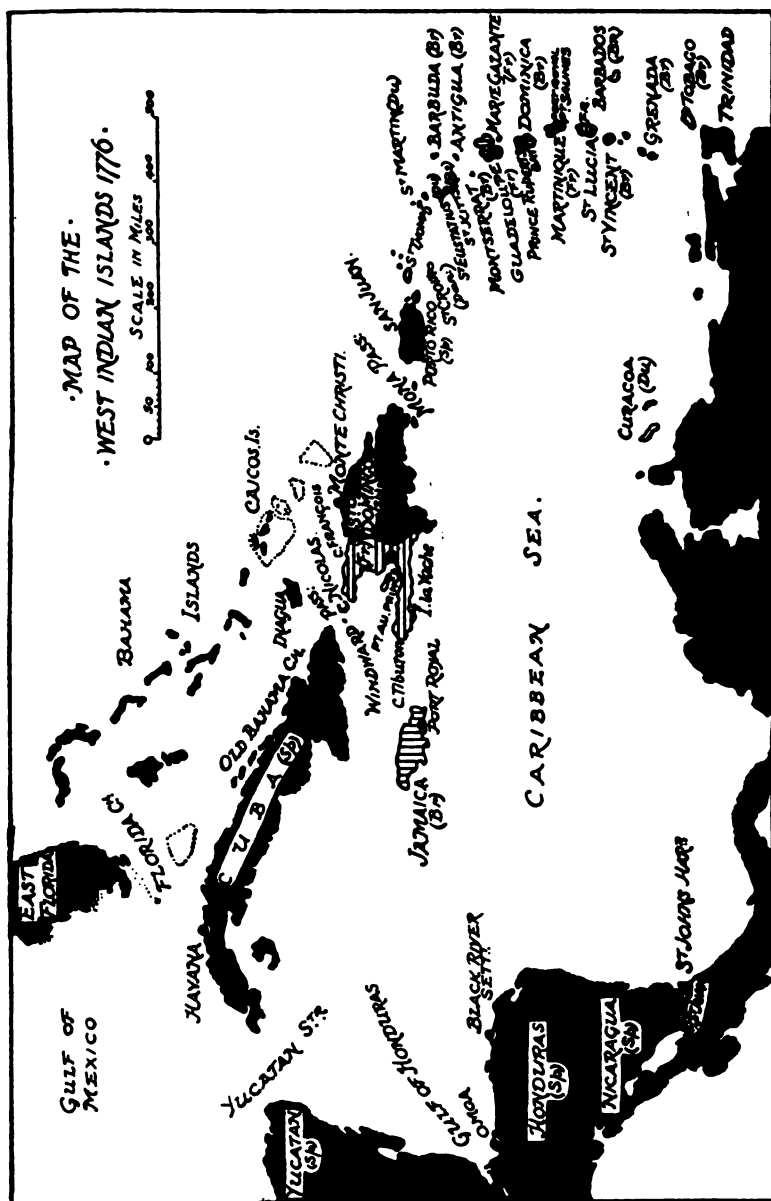




work could be found. The position of these bases was, therefore, a most important consideration when preparing strategic plans. The execution of these plans, however, was to a great extent dependent on the elements, and naval commanders were often rendered impotent in the sailing era by gales or adverse winds.

That England, when at war with France, had the advantage in geographical position had been amply demonstrated during the Seven Years War. In 1757 and 1758, for example, both countries had endeavoured to effect a superior concentration in American waters, but whilst the departure of the British squadrons had not been challenged, the French squadrons had only been able to clear their ports by evading Hawke's blockading fleet off Brest, and a British fleet at Gibraltar. In 1757 the weather had favoured the French, and they had succeeded in evading Hawke when a gale had driven him off his station, and also in passing Gibraltar at night with a fair wind. They had thus been able to concentrate a force on the other side of the Atlantic which the British Admiral, Holburne, was not in sufficient strength to fight. But in 1758 this state of affairs had been reversed. The weather conditions enabled the British squadrons to restrict the enemy's movements to such an extent that the fleet they had been able to concentrate at Louisburg was considerably weaker than that under Boscawen, with the result that Louisburg had been taken and the way cleared for the advance on Quebec. Again, in 1759, when a preliminary concentration of every available ship was an integral feature of Choiseul's grandiose invasion plan, the French squadrons had been hemmed in and defeated in detail by Hawke at Quiberon and Boscawen off Lagos. The truth was that, though the system of blockade often disclosed weakness when the elements were unfavourable, the fleet that never knew from day to day when it would be able to sail was morally defeated, nor could it execute plans to a time-table.

The position of these bases also had a special significance on account of the route taken by ships sailing to the Indies. There were no alternative routes. West-bound ships clearing from British ports worked their way south to the latitude of Madeira in order to pick up the trade-wind. Ships bound for the East Indies, via the Cape, took the same course for the first part of



MAP VII

the voyage. They were thus in a danger-zone until well clear of the latitude of Gibraltar, and their safety could only be assured by the adoption of a convoy and escort system. During the eighteenth century trade with their overseas possessions was of vital importance to Great Britain, France, Spain and Holland. It has been calculated that in the case of France, thirty per cent. of her imports and thirty-five per cent. of her exports represented trade with the West Indies. Bordeaux was the chief port for exports, but Rouen and Havre sent over a hundred vessels to the islands annually, and Marseilles had a busy trade. 1778

None of the islands were self-supporting. Their revictualling from time to time was essential to their existence, and often caused a deflection of strategy.

The British West Indies consisted of a chain of islands running from St. Kitts to Tobago, Barbados, a hundred miles to the eastward of this chain, and Jamaica, a thousand miles to the westward. The prevailing wind was north-easterly, and it was therefore an easy matter for ships to sail from the Windward Islands to Jamaica, but a very long and arduous operation to make the reverse passage. For this reason outward-bound convoys from England made their landfall at Barbados, where ships with cargoes for the various Windward Islands parted company, and the remainder went on in convoy to Jamaica.

For the homeward voyage the ships with cargoes from the Windward Islands collected at St. Kitts, the most northerly of the British islands, and then made their way north to about the latitude of Bermuda to pick up the prevailing west wind to carry them home to the Channel. But homeward-bound ships clearing from Jamaica, instead of beating to the eastward, took advantage of the Gulf Stream, and, after passing through the Yucatan Channel, made their way north till they felt the west wind.

The position of the French possessions in the West Indies was, geographically, very similar to that of the British. To the eastward, or windward, they held St. Lucia, Martinique and Guadeloupe, and to leeward Haiti, with its good harbour at Cap François. In the Western area the French had the advantage of position, as Haiti was well to windward of Jamaica.

Spain held Porto Rico, San Domingo and Cuba, all to leeward

1778 of the British eastern chain of islands, and the Dutch, St. Eustatius, a great store depot, at the northern end of the Windward Islands, and Curaçoa, to the southward and leeward.

Though the islands were divided fairly evenly between England, France and Spain, the latter two countries had a considerable advantage in the matter of good anchorages and ports of refit.

British ships could undergo minor refit at English Harbour, Antigua, and at Barbados, but the anchorage at the latter island was a bad one. There were facilities at Jamaica for heaving ships down to clean and examine their bottoms, but no Admiral would willingly send ships a thousand miles to leeward. There were some facilities at New York for ships of under sixty-four guns, and also at Halifax, but ships in need of serious repairs had to return to England.

On the other hand, the French had four good harbours at St. Lucia, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Cap François, and the Spaniards, in Havana, possessed a fine harbour with shipbuilding facilities.

The hurricane season, which lasted from July to October, determined the duration of naval operations and the convoy programmes. No big ships put to sea during those months, and convoys were timed to arrive from Europe not later than June or earlier than January. Homeward-bound convoys sailed in May or June, and sometimes in November.

It will thus be seen that senior officers responsible for the direction of operations in West Indian waters had many difficulties to contend with in the sailing era. The windward position, once surrendered, could only be recovered by days or weeks of laborious work; the campaigning season was a short one, and ships involved in operations and far from good shelter when the hurricane season commenced, would be courting disaster; the revictualling of the island populations from time to time was vital to their existence; the defence of the convoy assembly ports at certain fixed dates took preference of other operations; there were few facilities for the docking and upkeep of the fleet or for the repair of damaged ships and, in this respect, France and Spain had a distinct advantage.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONJOINT NAVAL AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA, 1778

THE long warning period was over, and the time had at last arrived for Sandwich to give an account of his work. His more optimistic colleagues may perhaps have expected that a War Plan would be forthcoming from the Admiralty, but there was no plan, nor, indeed, was there very much to plan with. 1778

Intelligence had been received of considerable activity at Toulon, where M. Girard, the newly appointed Ambassador to the United States, was waiting to take passage to America. The French Government spread the news that the squadron fitting out was destined for Brest.

The obvious course to adopt was the well-tried one of forbidding freedom of movement to the enemy by a fleet based on Gibraltar to prevent the Toulon squadron sailing to the West Indies or concentrating with the Brest squadron, and a fleet off Brest, with inshore frigates, to bar the exit of the ships based there.

But the ships available for immediate service were quite inadequate for such a plan, and the only action taken was to send a frigate to cruise in the Gibraltar Strait to obtain news of the Toulon fleet, whilst endeavours were made to fit out squadrons for service in America and the Channel.

In France, on the other hand, war plans had received considerable attention. Though not adopted, as both assumed the co-operation of the Spanish fleet, those of Vergennes and Fleurieu are of interest, as they show that French strategists favoured dispersion of effort and did not consider the possibilities of maximum

1778 concentration on the vital point. A similar strategy had been employed during the opening phases of the Seven Years War.

In January, Vergennes submitted to the Court at Madrid a 'Memoir on the Operations which our Naval Forces can undertake against England.' He estimated that France had forty-eight battleships available in European waters, thirty-one at Brest, seventeen at Toulon. From Toulon she could detach ten to go to Cadiz and be under Spanish orders; from Brest she could detach six for special service, whilst the remaining twenty-five formed a permanent force ready to put to sea at the first signal. It was necessary to reserve three or four out of the seven left at Toulon, and some frigates, to form a squadron whose object should be to 'keep free the channel between Corsica and France.' Then, if the British did not arrive in the Mediterranean, the Toulon squadron would, in the autumn, attempt to recapture Senegal, or at any rate to destroy the British settlements in that region. Of the six battleships spared from the Brest fleet, one or two, with the same number of frigates, would be sent to cruise in the North Sea, as there would be great advantage gained by intercepting the convoys of naval stores which Britain received from the Baltic ports and even from Archangel whilst the American harbours were closed to them. In case of danger this flying division in the North Sea would take refuge in Swedish harbours, Marstrand or Gutenborg. In order to compel the British to distribute their forces and, by this indirect method, to bring about freedom of communication between French and United States harbours, as well as freedom of movement for the Spanish fleets, the French Government proposed to establish a camp in Normandy and another between Dunkirk and Boulogne. This would lead the enemy to suppose that invasion of the English coast was intended.

In Vergennes' plan, the cruise off Corsica, the expedition to Senegal, the North Sea cruise, and the formation of a camp in Normandy, were all auxiliary operations intended to deceive or anticipate the enemy. Therein lay its weakness. There were more important objects for the soldiers in the camps and the detached ships than merely acting as diversionary forces. The

Channel Islands were in a weak state of defence and only a short distance from the coast and, consequently, a suitable military objective. Furthermore, a concentration of every available ship to command the Channel entrance would have effected Vergennes' object of 'bringing about freedom of communication between France and United States harbours' much more surely than the dispersion of force he proposed. 1778

Later in the year Fleurieu, who had been long at work on war plans, reported to the King, through Sartine, that forty-five ships of the line were ready for commissioning. Counting the Spaniards he estimated that a fleet of eighty-seven ships of the line was ready to operate against the enemy's seventy-two, and proposed immediate offensive operations in the form of an 'attack on the English at different points at the same time.' He advised that forty-five ships of the line should be based on the Atlantic coast, twelve ships of the line should remain in the Mediterranean, twenty ships of the line should be detached to the West Indies and the remainder should be employed in the Southern seas and on special work.

But France decided to commence hostilities before Spain had made up her mind to join her old ally, and the primary object of the war at that moment being to 'give efficient assistance to the Americans to assure their civil independence on a permanent basis,' the first naval movement was the sailing of the squadron from Toulon to operate in North American waters.

On the 1st of April an important debate took place in the April 1 House of Lords.

The Duke of Richmond, who had come to the conclusion that America was lost beyond recovery and that it was therefore only prudent to cut the loss and attend to the new enemy, moved an address to the Crown for the withdrawal of the forces in America.

Chatham, who was in a feeble state of mind and body, then made his last speech, in which he called on the Government to accept the challenge of France, fight the war out with full vigour, and sweep aside any suggestion of giving up the American Colonies. While rising a second time to reply to the Duke, he fainted. He was carried to the Clerk of the House's residence, and thence to



1778 his own home at Hayes, where he died on the 11th of May in his seventieth year.

April 13 The Duke of Richmond's motion was lost by thirty-three votes to fifty, an indication of the division of opinion that existed at this time. Shortly after this debate the Comte d'Estaing sailed from Toulon with twelve ships of the line and five frigates, and there was nothing to prevent him concentrating with the Brest fleet of twenty of the line then being prepared for sea under Comte d'Orvilliers. But the French strategy did not aim at concentration, and his destination was North America.

Comte d'Estaing was forty-nine years of age. As a Colonel in the army of Marshal Saxe he had been wounded at Maastricht in 1748. Later on he had fought in India under Lally and D'Aché. Having spent so much of his service in the army he was naturally an object of jealousy to naval officers. On this subject he wrote : ' I have never passed through the early stages of the Navy. I have that in common with four of the greatest men who have been in command. The great Du Quesne is one of them. Marshal Tourville also joined with the rank he held in the Army. M. du Guay-Trouin and Jean Bart did not first serve in the Navy on account of their birth. If I ever manage to imitate them in something it would be splendid to have had the same disadvantages as them.'<sup>1</sup>

His orders gave him a very free hand, but if a superior British fleet arrived in North American waters, he was to retire to Boston to revictual and sail thence to the West Indies for operations against the British West Indian Islands. M. Girard, the newly appointed Ambassador, took passage in the fleet. We may pause for a moment to glance at his instructions, which were dated the 29th of March. They began by saying that the effect of the Declaration of the 4th of July, 1776, was to give the United States the status of an independent nation. Since that event the defeat of Burgoyne had precipitated events, and the time had come for France to play a decisive rôle. This was all the more urgent because Great Britain was considering means of reconciliation with the Colonists, and, as reconciliation would be hostile to the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

interests of France, no time should be lost in coming to an understanding with Congress. Certain stipulations had been agreed to, and these stipulations must now be rendered definite and absolute. The first stipulation that neither party should make peace without the other's consent would be faithfully observed, and the Ambassador was to convince Congress that France intended to honour her signature, so that any British suggestions to Congress would be effectually checkmated. The military operations would depend on circumstances, but the Ambassador was to assure Congress that France would make every effort to prevent Great Britain reinforcing her army in America, and that the fleet under d'Estaing would be powerful enough to destroy the British fleet, or at least to prevent supplies reaching the British army. As to the possibility of concerted operations by the United States army and the French fleet, d'Estaing had been given the necessary power to act according to circumstances.

Spain had taken no part in the two treaties, and had not up to the moment of writing explained her conditions for joining in the war against Great Britain. The King considered this question of Spain one of the highest importance. There was reason to believe that she wished to acquire Florida, part of the Newfoundland fisheries and Jamaica. France would deal with the two latter objects, which were within her province, but, as the conquest of Florida was one of the objects of the American army, the United States would have to be prepared for eventual renunciation, and the King trusted to the prudence of the Ambassador to smooth the way.

Congress had proposed that France should look with favour on the conquest of Canada, Nova Scotia and Florida by the United States, but the King considered that Canada should remain a British possession, so that the 'uneasiness and watchfulness' which the presence of a potential enemy on their border would produce would make the Americans sensible of the need for alliance with France. No agreement, therefore, could be entered into in regard to these projects of conquest. If Congress brought up the matter, the Ambassador was to reply that the King would willingly concur in the plan of conquest as far as

1778 circumstances would permit, but the uncertainty and variable nature of the King's engagements would not allow him to come to a formal agreement. If Congress became too pressing the Ambassador was to comply with their wishes but at the same time let it be understood that the retention of the conquests would not be an essential condition of the peace.

Finally, the Ambassador was to inform Congress that France could not assist the Americans with money.

A feature of these instructions was the explicitness of those paragraphs which dealt with the conquest of British possessions. The Ambassador was to go to any length to satisfy Congress that the King favoured their aspirations, but he was to withhold definite promises, as the King believed that the best method of maintaining the alliance was to keep his new ally in daily fear of enemies on her border. This was certainly not honest dealing, but it was a policy in general favour at that period. During the Seven Years War many British statesmen held similar views with regard to Canada and the proximity of the French colonists. The Duke of Bedford, who had a considerable following amongst the politicians of the day, wrote to the Duke of Newcastle in 1761, 'Indeed, my Lord, I don't know whether the neighbourhood of the French to our North American colonies was not the greatest security for their dependence on the mother country, which I feel will be slighted by them when their apprehension of the French is removed.'<sup>1</sup>

The British Government, in the meantime, had appointed Vice-Admiral the Hon. J. Byron, one of Anson's men in his famous voyage, to command a squadron of thirteen of the line. His orders were to prepare for sea at Plymouth and await news of d'Estaing. Great difficulty was experienced in manning and storing his squadron on account of the bad state of the dockyard. Men and stores had to be taken from the ships preparing for service in the Channel Fleet to make up deficiencies.

June 6 At last, on the 6th of June, the *Proserpine* frigate, which had been sent to watch the Straits, arrived home, and reported that she had sighted d'Estaing's fleet in the Straits on the 16th of

<sup>1</sup> Bedford to Newcastle, 'May 9, 1761,' Newcastle Papers.

May, and had followed it as far west as long. 7°. It was now certain that d'Estaing's destination was America, and Byron was ordered to sail. He managed to get his fleet to sea on the 9th of June, by which time d'Estaing was far on his way, and about to appear with superior force on a coast where the control of sea communications was vital to the British operations. Hyde Parker hoisted his flag as second-in-command, and amongst the Captains were Thomas Graves, Francis Samuel Drake and Thomas Collingwood. 1778 June 9

Another serious result of the bad state of the dockyards and ships was the delay in arranging adequate escort for West India convoys. Merchant ships were kept waiting for months whilst the Admiralty were endeavouring to find something to sail with them, whilst on the other side of the Atlantic the inhabitants of the islands were enduring great privations.

We must now retrace our steps and pick up the story of the operations in America from the time that Howe and Clinton went into winter quarters at Philadelphia and New York at the end of 1777. Minor operations for the purpose of collecting forage and supplies were frequent, and a combined expedition, consisting of infantry in flatboats escorted by frigates and schooners, met with considerable success up the Delaware River, destroying two frigates, many smaller vessels and quantities of stores. Captain Griffith, who had been left in command at Rhode Island when Sir Peter Parker was appointed to the Jamaica Station, proved an energetic commander, and in May two successful amphibious operations, conducted by troops in flatboats escorted by frigates, took place up the river towards Providence.

Before the season was suitable for active operations General Howe sailed for home and handed over the command to Clinton. A grand entertainment was given before his departure, and Washington was quick to seize the opportunity of making a surprise attack. He detailed Lafayette for the command, but, as so often happened, news of the impending attack was received in Philadelphia, and, on a British force moving out, the Americans retreated.

In June a final attempt was made to negotiate peace with the

- 1778 Colonists. In accordance with the announcement in Parliament, the 64-gun ship *Trident* had sailed at the end of April with the 'Commissioners for restoring peace,' the Earl of Carlisle, William Eden, and George Johnstone. They arrived in the Delaware on the
- June 7 7th of June and attempted to enter into negotiations with Congress. They had wide powers, and the gist of their offer to the Colonists was that each State should be governed by its own legislature, which was to have power to settle revenue questions and civil and military establishments, but that all should still acknowledge the King, and act with Great Britain in peace and war. Long debates took place in Congress, and finally the President, Henry Laurens, informed the Commissioners that, before negotiations could commence, either the Independence of the American States must be acknowledged or the fleet and army withdrawn. The Commissioners were unable to accept these terms, and the second attempt to end hostilities failed.

In the meantime, Clinton had received letters from home containing the new plan of campaign. He was instructed to withdraw the army from Philadelphia, concentrate at New York, and there await the result of the Commissioners' negotiations; he was also to detach an expeditionary force of 5,000 men to capture St. Lucia and another of 3,000 men to St. Augustine and Pensacola in Florida. Should the Commissioners' efforts fail, New York was to be evacuated, garrisons left at Halifax and Rhode Island, and the remainder were to proceed to Canada. The letter contained some vague promise of reinforcements.

Germain was once more indulging in a policy of dispersion of effort. The capture of St. Lucia was a justifiable object, as the fleet were in need of a naval base closer to Martinique, but the expedition to Florida, which was to be undertaken under the belief that help would be forthcoming from loyalists, was useless, and the proposal to pour troops into Canada was not an operation likely to result in the subjugation of the Americans. The withdrawal from Philadelphia was, however, a good move, as there was inherent weakness in dividing the main army between New York and Philadelphia with the sea as the only line of communication, and that line, moreover, no longer secure.

On the 30th of January the *Ariel* frigate arrived at Rhode Island with despatches for the Admiral. Lord Howe then learnt for the first time that it was possible he might have to meet a new and more powerful enemy. His ships were inadequate, both in number and condition, to fight a French fleet and at the same time support the army. 'I am much concerned,' he wrote, 'that upon an occasion of so great importance to the King's service in this country, I am unable to assure you for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that such sufficient precautions have been taken as promise those advantageous consequences which, from the circumstantial matter of the intelligence, might be reasonably expected.'<sup>1</sup> He pointed out the weakness of the fleet, the amount of sickness, and the want of stores. 'Ships have been so much reduced with respect to naval stores, that the large supplies lately received will not be more than equal to their demands.' He requested that the ships should be relieved in quicker succession.<sup>1</sup>

1778  
Jan. 30

To meet the danger from the new quarter he proposed to adopt defensive measures, and station 'three ships of force for each of the principal stations at Chesapeake Bay, New York, Rhode Island, and Halifax, and urged the Admiralty to send out ten of the line with all despatch as a reinforcement.'<sup>1</sup>

He sailed from Rhode Island on the 23rd of March, and after a stormy passage arrived in the Delaware on the 16th of April.

Mar. 23  
April 16

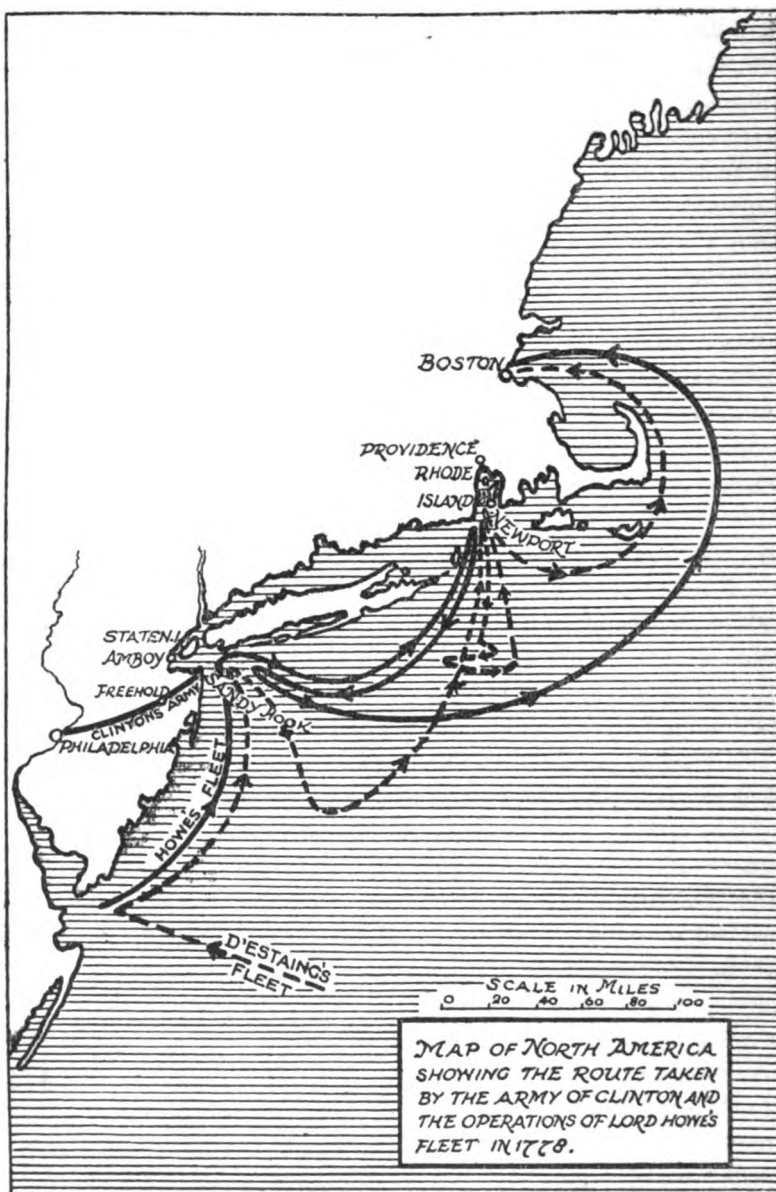
For a long time he had experienced the need of some more senior officers to assist him. In April he appointed Captain Duncan 'Adjutant to the Commander-in-Chief,' but the Admiralty did not send out the officers he needed, and shortly after arriving in the Delaware he wrote that 'Their Lordships not having been pleased therein to honour me with their notice of the conditional request in my letter of the 23rd of last November, I am under a necessity of soliciting that I may be relieved in the command.'<sup>2</sup>

On the 8th of May the sloop *Porcupine* brought him definite news of the entry of France on the side of the Colonists, and he 'immediately prepared to collect a force suited as much as possible

May 8

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Eagle, Rhode Island, February 4, 1778.

<sup>2</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Eagle, Delaware, April 23, 1778.'



MAP VIII

to the further purpose of Their Lordships' said instructions, not having received advice of the arrival of any part of the French squadron referred to therein.' <sup>1</sup> 1778

He ordered all ships to concentrate in the Delaware, and hurried on the preparation of the transports for the evacuation of the army. But a superior enemy fleet was somewhere within striking distance, and the transport of the army by sea would be attended by grave risks. It was accordingly decided that the army should move overland, and on the 18th of June Clinton set out on his long and difficult march to New York. June 18

Howe cleared the harbour entrance on the 28th, and anchored next day at Sandy Hook with the transports carrying the army's stores and heavy baggage. To give early warning of the enemy he threw out a line of frigates to the south to watch for and shadow the French fleet. June 28

A little further delay and Howe would have been trapped, for d'Estaing, after a very long voyage, arrived in the Delaware on the 8th of July, ten days after Howe had cleared the headlands. Howe's force in the Delaware was only two 64-gun ships and two smaller ships of the line, and if d'Estaing had been able to attack before his enemy had concentrated, nothing could have saved Clinton from the same fate as Burgoyne. July 8

As Clinton's army of 15,000 struggled forward in two columns, under Knyphausen and Cornwallis, news was received that Washington and Lee had crossed the Delaware, and that Gates with an army from the north was advancing to join them on the River Raritan. Clinton then decided to make for Sandy Hook via Freehold, and give up any attempt to reach New York via Amboy. Washington saw his chance, and ordered detachments to harass the flanks of the British army as they marched. The rearguard was heavily attacked by Lee and Lafayette, but they were driven off. The heat and the fighting caused 358 casualties to the British army, and, in addition, many men deserted to renew a more pleasant life in Philadelphia. Clinton took up a position near Sandy Hook, in the hopes that Washington would attack, whilst Captain Duncan prepared a bridge of boats for the army

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, Billingsport, May 9, 1778.'



1778 to cross to New York. Washington, however, did not attack,  
July 5 and the army finally arrived in New York on the 5th of July.

On the day Howe arrived at Sandy Hook a packet from England brought news of the sailing of the Toulon squadron, and, in addition, quite recent news of that squadron, as she had been sighted and chased by French ships not far from the coast. The despatches also informed Howe of the sailing of Byron's squadron.

July 7 On the 7th of July a frigate brought further news that d'Estaing had been sighted two days earlier off the coast of Virginia, apparently bound for the Chesapeake, but that, as a result of shadowing, it had been ascertained that the French fleet had anchored in the Delaware. This news was confirmed in the evening by another frigate.

Four days later the *Zebra* sloop came in with the news that the evening before she had sighted twelve of the line and three frigates flying French colours on a course for New York.

This excellent work by Howe's cruisers is worthy of special notice. Despite the poor state of the fleet as a whole, Howe evidently had some really good men as cruiser-captains, who knew exactly what was required of them.

The problem that faced the British Admiral was no easy one. His total available force was six sixty-fours, three fifties, and six frigates, and though he still awaited accurate intelligence as to d'Estaing's strength, he knew that the French ships would be larger and mount heavier broadsides. To take his fleet to sea and fight a much superior force might end in a defeat which would bring all operations in America to an end, and he decided instead to prevent d'Estaing entering the harbour and thus protect the army.

To turn a mobile force such as a fleet into fixed defences has often proved a fatal policy. But there is a great difference between demobilising a fleet by taking its guns and men for land defences, and anchoring ships to form temporary fixed defences when the shore batteries are inadequate. In the latter case, the fleet is still ready for sea in all respects.

Howe's dispositions are of great interest, and the extent to which his squadron was undermanned is clearly shown by the

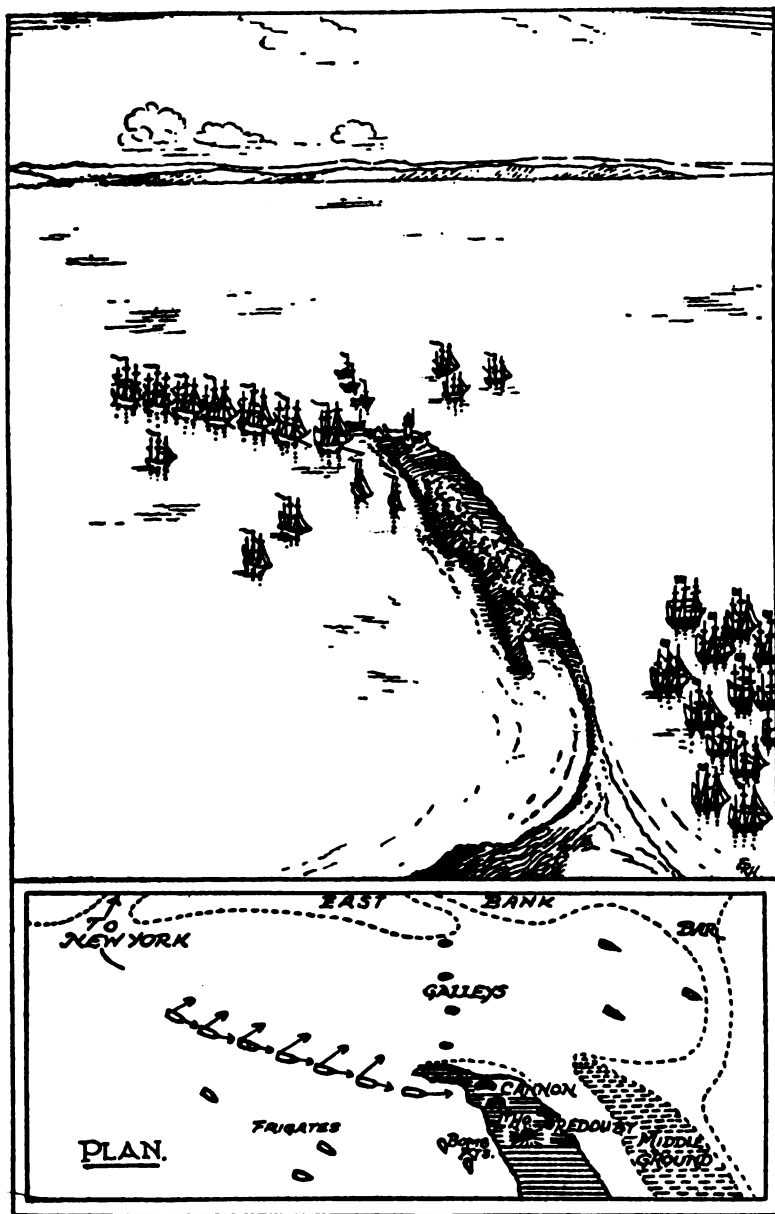


DIAGRAM 1.—HOWE'S DEFENSIVE LINE AT NEW YORK, 1778

1778 number of volunteers whose services were accepted in order to render the ships fully efficient. Great enthusiasm prevailed, and practically every man in the transports and victuallers begged to be allowed to serve in the men-of-war ; some of those not chosen even hid in the boats that conveyed their more fortunate ship-mates to the fighting line. Grenadiers and light infantrymen, though they had only just completed a long and arduous march, cast lots to decide who should have the honour of serving in the ships. Masters of small craft volunteered to use their ships to strengthen the patrol line in order to warn merchant ships of the presence of d'Estaing and try to get into touch with Byron, and a certain Gideon Duncan, a native of Scotland, begged Howe to allow him to convert his ship, his sole possession, into a fireship, which he himself was to conduct alongside the French Admiral's ship if it anchored in the harbour.

Such was the spirit, and it must have gladdened the heart of Howe, who himself was working night and day to prepare the fleet.

He ordered six of the line and the *Leviathan*, a store ship manned by volunteers and supplied with shore artillery, to anchor on a line from Sandy Hook across the main channel. He further directed them to put springs on their cables so that they could bring full broadsides to bear on ships coming up harbour, and, if the attackers survived the first broadside, could swing and again bring full fire to bear as they passed. He kept one ship of the line and some frigates as a mobile reserve, ready to support where required, and detailed one ship of the line and two frigates as an advanced force to harry the enemy crossing the bar.

Clinton was equally active, and, amongst other defensive measures, erected a battery at the end of Sandy Hook and posted four regiments to guard against any attempts to land. (Diagram No. 1.)

July 11 D'Estaing arrived before this well-prepared defence on the 11th of July, and anchored about four miles from Sandy Hook. His fleet consisted of two eighties, six seventy-fours, three sixty-fours, one fifty-four, and six frigates.

He then revictualled his ships by boats working to and from

the shore, entered into communication with Washington, and took on board a number of pilots. Letters from Washington and Lafayette to d'Estaing show clearly how much they expected from the superior fleet which had arrived to co-operate with them. 1778

On the 22nd of July the wind served for sailing up the harbour, July 22 a spring tide gave thirty feet on the bar, and Howe and his men were expecting to be in action at any moment, as d'Estaing had weighed at eight o'clock.

But the suspense came to an end at three o'clock in the afternoon, when the French fleet was seen to be shaping course to the southward, and Howe was left wondering what had suddenly deflected his opponent from the obvious course of action. It was probably some time before he learnt that it was thanks to the New York pilots that the attack never materialised. They reported to d'Estaing that there was not sufficient water at the bar for his heavy-draught ships, and though he offered a large sum of money if they would take the ships in, they refused to make the attempt. He did not consider the alternative of attacking with the lighter-draught vessels. A lieutenant who was sent to check the pilots' information reported only twenty-two feet on the bar, but it is evident that no proper reconnaissance was made to obtain the information, and just for lack of ordinary commonsense measures d'Estaing's whole plan of operation was brought to nought.

On seeing d'Estaing's move to the southward, Howe at once ordered his small craft to shadow and report, and on the 26th of July he received news that the French squadron had been off the Delaware on the 23rd, but nothing further was brought in by his frigates until d'Estaing arrived off Rhode Island later in the month. July 26

At the end of the month much-needed reinforcements arrived. On the 26th a 50-gun ship joined from the West Indies, on the 27th a '64' and a '50' joined from Halifax, where they had been refitting, and on the 30th a '74,' the first of Byron's fleet<sup>1</sup> arrived. But this last ship brought a tale of disaster. 'Foul-weather Jack,' as the sailors called Byron, had once more earned his nick-

<sup>1</sup> For details, see Appendix V.

1778 name. When about half-way across the Atlantic heavy gales had been experienced, which had scattered the ships over the ocean, and they had not been able to rejoin the flagship. So there was no means of knowing when the other ships might be expected, or, indeed, whether they would ever arrive.

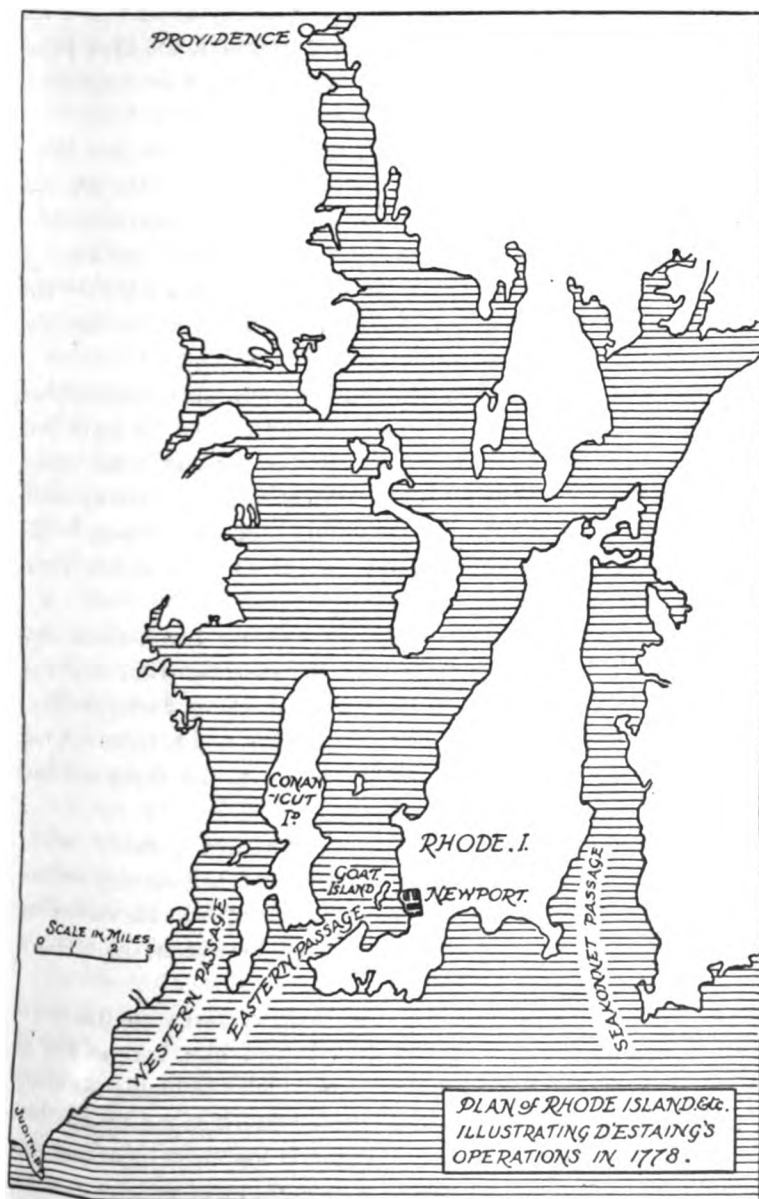
In the meantime Washington and d'Estaing had concerted a plan for a combined attack on Rhode Island. In pursuance of this plan the French fleet arrived off Judith Point on the 29th of July, and d'Estaing detached two ships of the line under Suffren to anchor off the south end of Conanicut Island and two frigates and a brig to operate up the Sakonnet Passage. The Sakonnet detachment compelled the British naval commander to destroy a sloop and some galleys. Threatened by an attack in force, General Pigot withdrew his troops to a defensive position round Newport, leaving a small garrison at Goat Island, whose batteries commanded the main channel. To guard against direct attack from the sea the naval commander gave orders to sink a frigate and a sloop between Goat and Rhode Islands, and several large vessels in the entrance to the inner harbour.

Aug. 2 On the 2nd of August the French took possession of Conanicut Island, and on the 5th Suffren weighed and anchored in the main channel north of the island. Captain Brisbane, who had been operating with four frigates, then found himself cut off, and destroyed his little squadron.

Aug. 8 At noon on the 8th, d'Estaing stood in under easy sail with his whole squadron, ran past the batteries, and came to anchor between Goat Island and Conanicut Island. This move placed Pigot in a critical position. His small force was hemmed in by a vastly superior army on the land side and a powerful fleet on the sea side. If no relief force appeared, it was only a question of days before a British force would again be compelled to surrender.

Aug. 9 But help was not far off, and about noon on the 9th the anxiety of the garrison was suddenly dispelled by news of a fleet in the offing. Once more the fate of an army was decided by the timely arrival of a sea force.

Howe, who had been informed by a packet vessel of the state of affairs and d'Estaing's dispositions, determined to 'profit by



MAP IX

1778 any opportunity which might offer for taking advantage of the enemy in that divided situation.'<sup>1</sup> A regiment, the 23rd, joined the fleet as volunteers to fill the many vacancies in complement, and three fireships were added to the squadron.

Owing to adverse winds Howe could not get his fleet to sea until the 6th. He anchored off Judith Point on the 9th, and there received the latest news from Pigot. Despite his reinforcements he was still very inferior to d'Estaing, and found it 'impracticable to afford the General any essential relief.'<sup>1</sup> But Aug. 10 d'Estaing did not remain in his position long. Next day, the wind coming fair, he weighed and stood out to sea.

On seeing the French fleet coming out of harbour, Howe formed his line and steered to the southward, in the hopes that the southerly breeze would be felt later in the day, which would give him the windward position. With his comparatively weak squadron his one chance was to obtain the weather-gage.<sup>2</sup> He sent his bomb ketches and galleys with one frigate to New York, but kept his three fireships in tow.

D'Estaing also steered south on clearing the harbour, and obtained the weather position with the easterly wind that was blowing, but was not able to come up with Howe during the day. To keep in touch with the enemy during the night, Howe ordered the frigate *Apollo* to take station between the fleets and use private signals.

At dawn next day the French fleet was nearly dead to windward of the British fleet, both being on a south-easterly course. Howe then took a step which is of great interest. He shifted his flag to the *Apollo* in order the better to watch the enemy's manœuvres and decide his own.

Beatson, the contemporary historian, remarks on this novel idea: 'At the same time, the fleet beheld him take a step of which they could not but approve, and which was highly necessary in the present situation. It has been acknowledged by the best naval officers that a station in the line is the most improper that a Commander-in-Chief can occupy, in the time of action; because

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, August 17, 1778.'

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Appendix IV.

in this situation it is impossible for him to see the operations of the fleets, and of course he cannot be qualified for issuing the orders necessary either to the preservation of his own ships or to the discomfiture of those of the enemy. Although many allow the propriety of this conduct, few would have the magnanimity so far to condemn the censure which might arise from a misconstruction of the motive as to put it into practice.' 1778

'Doubtless the personal courage of no officer could be better established than that of his Lordship already was: and on the present occasion, when he was to engage a fleet so much superior to that which he commanded, he could look for success only by a prompt and critical exertion of his professional skill and abilities.' <sup>1</sup>

Unable to gain the windward position, Howe decided to wear, and steer on a northerly course. D'Estaing followed suit, but not at once, and by the time the manœuvre was completed he was astern of the British line.

Howe, in the *Apollo*, had, in the meanwhile, been able to get a closer view of the enemy, and, finding that d'Estaing's heavier ships were in the van, ordered the *Cornwall*, a '74,' to change places with the *Centurion*, a '50.'

The French ships were outsailing their opponents, and it must have appeared to all that the first serious naval action of the war was about to be fought. But it was getting late in the day, the wind had freshened, frequent rain-squalls were reducing the visibility, and d'Estaing decided not to press his advantage but to haul away to the southward. The ships were soon under close-reefed topsails, and Howe was unable to transfer to his flagship from the *Apollo*. A full gale blew that night, the ships got separated, and the little *Apollo* lost her fore and main top-masts.

On the 18th the weather moderated, and Howe was able to transfer to the *Centurion* and proceed in search of his scattered fleet. He subsequently transferred to another vessel and left the *Centurion* to cruise off the coast and direct any of his own squadron or Byron's lost squadron to the rendezvous at Sandy Aug. 13

<sup>1</sup> *Beaumont's Naval and Military Memoirs*, vol. iv.



1778 Hook. At the rendezvous, where he arrived on the 17th, he  
Aug. 17 found that the *Cornwall* had sprung her mainmast, the *Raisonnable* had sprung her bowsprit, the fireships were badly damaged, and the *Isis* had been severely knocked about in action. Severe as this damage was, it was small in comparison with what the French fleet had suffered.

Aug. 13 On the evening of the 13th, the *Renown*, '50,' came across the *Languedoc*, '90,' the finest ship of the French fleet, and d'Estaing's flagship. She was totally dismasted, and at the mercy of her small opponent, but Dawson, the *Renown's* captain, missed a great opportunity. He sailed under the stern of the helpless Frenchman and poured in several broadsides which were only replied to by the few guns that could fire right aft. D'Estaing ordered the confidential papers to be thrown overboard, and all on board must have felt that their war service was at an end, but Dawson decided to lie-to for the night, and in the morning was driven off by several ships of the line who came to the assistance of their Admiral.

On the same night, Commodore Hotham, in the *Preston*, of fifty guns, came across a French '74' with only her mainmast standing. He attacked at once, and had given his big opponent a severe hammering, when he, too, was compelled to retire before superior enemy forces who had sailed to the sound of the guns.

Still another single-ship action was fought between the *Isis* of fifty guns and the *César*, a French '74.' The French ship chased the *Isis*, who, finding herself overhauled, threw her opponent into confusion by a clever manœuvre, and afterwards stood up so gallantly to the heavier broadside fire that the Frenchman broke off the action.

Many other ships had suffered severe damage from the gale, and d'Estaing, after collecting his fleet, remained at sea to repair and refit, and then sailed back to Rhode Island, where he arrived

Aug. 19 on the 19th. Byron, who had at last arrived after a tempestuous voyage of sixty-seven days, sighted him to the southward of Long Island, but being alone, and with no recent intelligence, he decided to make for Halifax. This sighting affected d'Estaing's movements later on.

In the interval between d'Estaing's departure and return, 1778 General Sullivan, the commander of the American army at Rhode Island, though disgusted at the behaviour of his French ally, and hindered by wet weather, had pushed forward his guns and compelled Pigot to retract his defensive line. Pigot was putting up a good defence, but his dismay can be imagined when the French fleet once more appeared, for his force was quite inadequate to meet attack from a new direction.

But once more the anxiety of the British was to be relieved by the unexpected, for d'Estaing, after remaining quietly at anchor for two days, sailed away and left Sullivan unsupported. He had decided to take his ships to Boston to refit.

Pigot, anxious to get news to Howe and Clinton, called for a volunteer, and Lieutenant Stanhope offered to sail a whaler to Sandy Hook, despite the heavy weather. After a boisterous passage, during which he sailed through the French fleet, he delivered his despatches safely to the Admiral. Howe had been displaying his usual energy in getting his sorely tried ships ready for service, and at the same time had sent out frigates to watch for d'Estaing. The frigates had brought news of the French fleet off Rhode Island, and Stanhope's additional information still further strengthened his determination to get to sea as soon as possible. On the 25th of August he sailed for Rhodé Island Aug. 25 with thirteen of the line (the *Monmouth* of Byron's squadron having joined) and a part of Clinton's army embarked in transports. His intention was to draw off the French fleet and leave a safe passage for the transports.

On passage he was spoken by a frigate with despatches from Pigot, which told him of d'Estaing's departure. He immediately altered course in the hopes of intercepting the French fleet, and sent on the news to Clinton, who at once set sail for Rhode Island. Howe arrived off Boston on the 30th, but was then delayed for Aug. 30 two days, as the energies of the squadron had to be devoted to floating off one of the line-of-battle ships which had grounded after missing stays.

The French had made good use of their time, and, with the assistance of volunteers, had erected many batteries on shore,

- 1778 whilst the fleet had been moored as far up harbour as possible. Howe, 'deeming every attempt against them ineligible in that situation,'<sup>1</sup> set sail for Rhode Island, where he arrived on the 4th of September. There he learnt that the enemy had raised the siege on the 30th of August, and, his presence not being required,
- Sept. 4
- Sept. 11 he set sail for Sandy Hook, arriving there on the 11th of September. At the anchorage he found Rear-Admiral Hyde Parker with six badly damaged ships of Byron's squadron. They had arrived on the 29th of August with their crews exhausted and rigging in sad need of repair.

In the meantime, Clinton, also finding his force was not required at Rhode Island, decided to operate against coast towns. At New London, his first objective, the wind did not serve for entering the harbour, so he sent General Grey on to Bedford, where about seventy privateers were burnt. The next port attacked was Holmes' Hole Harbour, in the island of Martha's Vineyard, where the arms of the militia, the public money, and a large quantity of stock were commandeered. The force then returned to New York.

- Sept. 25 On the 25th of September, Howe transferred the command to Rear-Admiral Gambier, and sailed for England.

And so ended the series of operations in which Howe and d'Estaing were the leading protagonists. As so often happens, no great battle was fought, there was no great dramatic event, and yet vital decisions depended on the decisions of the two commanders.

The energy and skill of Howe are beyond praise. Commanding a much inferior fleet, he was responsible for the control of the sea communications on the American coast, and also for the protection of two armies from attack by sea. He knew that Byron's squadron was on its way to reinforce him, but it had sailed many weeks after d'Estaing, and in the end only one ship arrived in time to assist him.

He took the only course possible when d'Estaing first arrived off Sandy Hook, and his powers of leadership are clearly shown by the attitude of soldiers, transport crews, and civilians when

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, '*Eagle*, Sandy Hook, September 12, 1778.'

he was preparing his defensive positions. He did not hesitate to answer the call from Rhode Island, and when d'Estaing came out to challenge him he was quite prepared to accept action with a superior force, provided he could get the windward position. Later on, with an inferior force, he hurried after d'Estaing in the hopes of cutting him off from Boston. 1778

But perhaps the greatest tribute to this splendid commander was the fact that, despite the absence of any dockyard facilities, he was able to proceed to sea with his fleet on the eighth day after the ships had arrived shattered by a gale.

He had heard on the 6th of September that he was appointed Vice-Admiral of the Red Squadron. But this did not appease his anger at the way he had been treated by the Home Authorities. In acknowledging the letter he wrote, 'though impressed with a just sense of the King's patronage on that occasion I cannot cease to lament the public testimonies of their Lordships' disesteem which I have experienced in a repeated separation from the flag officers with whom I first advanced to that rank.'<sup>1</sup>

Howe, like his brother, the General, was criticised in the newspapers and in pamphlets for failing to carry the war to a successful conclusion, and a speech he made in Parliament shows clearly why he requested to be relieved. He said that he had been deceived into his command, that he was deceived whilst he retained it, and that, but for the arrival of a superior enemy on his station, he would have come home earlier. He stated that 'so long as the present Ministers retained office' he would decline any further service, as it would not be prudent to trust the little reputation he had earned by forty years' service in the hands of men who had neither the ability to act on their own judgment nor the integrity and good sense to follow the advice of others.

And what can be said of d'Estaing, who threw away such magnificent opportunities?

A more persistent leader would not have been content with the pilots' stories of the depth of water at the bar. Only Howe's weak squadron lay between him and the main British army. It is true that Howe's preparations were very thorough, but the

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Eagle, Sandy Hook, September 12, 1778.'

1778 heavy French ships, sailing in with a fair wind, might well have broken through. 'New York was the principal British military post in the United States; to destroy there Howe's fleet and Clinton's army would have ended everything with one blow.'<sup>1</sup>

At Rhode Island he had another opportunity of dealing a vital blow. He had only to hold his ground at Rhode Island and dispose his ships to withstand attack from the sea, and the garrison must have fallen to the combined attack from sea and land. Again, when he returned after the storm, co-operation with Sullivan would soon have completed the discomfiture of Pigot, but, despite all the entreaties of the American Generals and Lafayette, he sailed away to Boston.

The two main causes of d'Estaing's failure were lack of offensive spirit and lack of proper discipline in the corps of officers.

D'Estaing himself was inclined to accede to the urgent representations of his allies when he returned to Rhode Island, but his captains and officers entered a formal protest, and insisted that he should obey his instructions literally. These instructions laid down that he was to proceed to Boston if the fleet met with any misfortune or a superior force arrived on the coast. The sighting of Byron's flagship after the storm was enough to convince his officers that the latter contingency had arisen, as they were aware of the sailing of the reinforcements from England.

Lafayette went to Boston to make a last effort to persuade d'Estaing to return to Rhode Island, but he refused, and instead offered to march south in command of the troops at Boston and assist the land forces. The offer was not accepted, but the incident shows that d'Estaing was not lacking in personal courage.

Sept. 26 On the 26th of September Byron arrived at Sandy Hook from Halifax with three of the line, and took command of the British fleet. It was three and a half months since he had sailed from England, and his squadron was at last concentrated at the scene of operations, but the *Russell*, of seventy-four guns, had returned to England, too badly damaged by gales to continue her passage across the Atlantic, and the *Invincible*, of seventy-four guns, was lying in a crippled state at St. John's, Newfoundland. All

<sup>1</sup> Lacour-Gayet, *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

Byron's ships required extensive refit, and it was not until the 18th of October that he was able to take the fleet to sea in search of d'Estaing. Once more 'Foul-weather Jack' earned his nickname. When only three days out, a violent gale shattered and dispersed his squadron. The *Somerset*, sixty-four guns, was wrecked on Cape Cod; the *Culloden*, seventy-four guns, was dismasted, and eventually arrived at Milford Haven; and the *Zebra*, sloop, was wrecked in Egg Harbour. After many trying experiences the ships concentrated at Rhode Island to refit.

1778  
Oct. 18

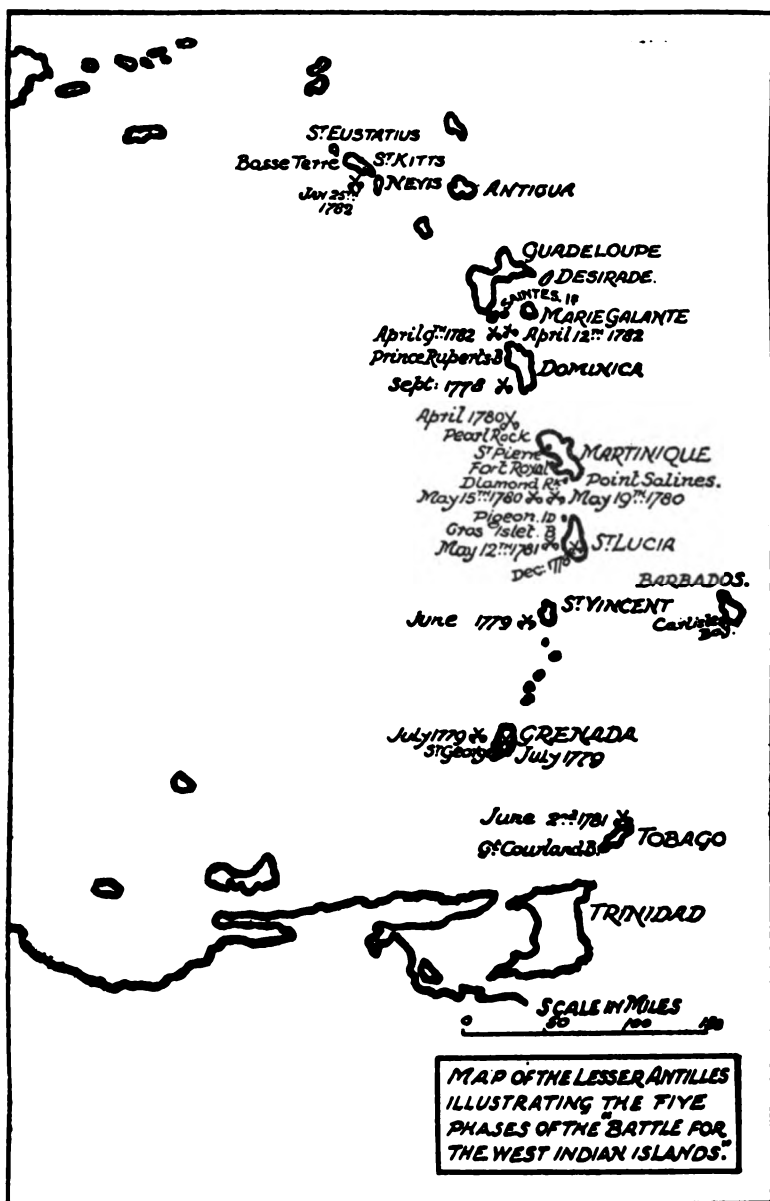
Meanwhile d'Estaing was having an unpleasant time at Boston, as the Americans were far from friendly to those they considered had left them in the lurch at Rhode Island. Fights were frequent between the townspeople and the French sailors, and he could not get the provisions he required. This latter difficulty was partly due to a shortage in the normal supply at Boston, and, but for the success of some privateers in capturing a number of British provision ships, it is doubtful if he could have taken his fleet to sea.

At last, on the 4th of November, he set sail for Martinique. Nov. 4

On the same day Commodore Hotham, with five of the line and a fleet of transports conveying 5,000 troops under Major-General Grant, sailed from New York to the West Indies, and on the 13th of December, Byron, with ten of the line, sailed from Rhode Island for the same destination. The scene of naval operations was thus transferred from the North American coast to the West Indies, and the oft-contested battle for the islands was about to commence.

Dec. 13

Military operations had, as usual, ceased with the coming of winter, but one of those badly designed enterprises resulting in a dissipation of force was launched at the end of November. The objective was the Southern States. Eight battalions under Colonel Campbell were embarked at New York, and a small squadron of frigates and one 44-gun ship, whose proceedings will be described at a later stage of this narrative, were detached under Captain Hyde Parker for escort and co-operation duties.



MAP X.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FIGHT FOR THE WEST INDIAN ISLANDS— FIRST PHASE, 1778

THE lack of strength and preparation which had hitherto characterised the British military and naval operations was nowhere more apparent than in the British possessions in the West Indies. Not only were many of the inhabitants openly in sympathy with the Americans, but the garrisons of the islands were very weak and unable, in many cases, to man the guns in the fortifications. 1778

The Naval force, which was under the command of Rear-Admiral Samuel Barrington, consisted of two line-of-battle ships and about thirteen small craft.

Early in the year his cruisers were employed operating against American privateers on the trade route to the east of Barbados, but no major operations were undertaken by either side until the autumn.

The French took the initiative in September, when the Marquis de Bouillé, Governor of Martinique, launched an attack against Dominica. He embarked a force of about 2,000 men in sloops and schooners, and, escorted by frigates and privateers, arrived off the island on the 7th. The weak garrison resisted to the best of their ability, but it was not long before it was obvious that Roseau, the capital, was doomed to fall, and the merchants and inhabitants prevailed on General Stewart to send a flag of truce. Sept. 7

The terms granted by de Bouillé were generous, and Dominica passed into French hands.

That the French took about 164 cannon shows that the island had been well fortified. It would not have been lost if the garrison had been strengthened when it was known that France was



1778 awaiting the favourable moment to spring. It possessed a first-rate anchorage in Prince Rupert's Bay, and its capture gave the French possession of the whole chain of islands from Guadeloupe to St. Lucia. De Bouillé left a garrison of 1,500 men, under the Marquis de Chilleau, and returned to Martinique.

And what was Barrington, with his superior force, doing all this time? He had left England before the French declaration of war, with orders to wait at Barbados for further instructions. And there he waited. No fast sailing frigate was sent to apprise him of the new enemy. On the 30th of August he received a letter from Governor Morris of St. Vincent enclosing a copy of document dated 'Paris, June 28, 1778,' which had been made public on the 15th of August. This document ordered the commencement of hostilities and was signed by the King and Sartine.

Sept. 7 This startling news was confirmed a week later by a frigate and Barrington at once sent letters to the islands to prepare for attack. He was soon beset by requests from the Governors. Macartney wrote that at Grenada there were only 100 men able to take arms and the Governor of Tobago wrote that he had only 400 militia and two defective companies of foot to protect an island, whose annual produce was worth £200,000.

Barrington was a man of action, and the moment he heard that the French were at Dominica he hurried to its relief. But he was too late. The French were firmly established, and there was nothing to be done but to return to Barbados.

The lack of stores was causing him anxiety. 'I confess myself much disappointed in not finding a naval storeship among the convoy as I am sorry to add to the remark I made in my letter of 25th September of there being a want of all kind of stores at Antigua.

'I am sorry to hear that Commodore Hotham's ships are very bare of stores, and short of complement.'<sup>1</sup>

It was not long before these minor operations were replaced by more serious fighting, for d'Estaing and Hotham were both on their way to the West Indies, bringing considerable armaments.

<sup>1</sup> Barrington's Despatches, '*Prince of Wales*, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, November 19 and 24.'

It will be remembered that both fleets sailed on the same day, 1778 one from Boston and one from New York, and as they took parallel courses they were quite close to one another during their voyage south.

Hotham with five of the line and Grant's army arrived at Barbados on the 10th of December, and the naval and military commanders at once decided to attack St. Lucia. Frigates were immediately despatched to blockade the island, and the fleet and transports anchored in the Grand Cul de Sac on the 13th. Dec. 10

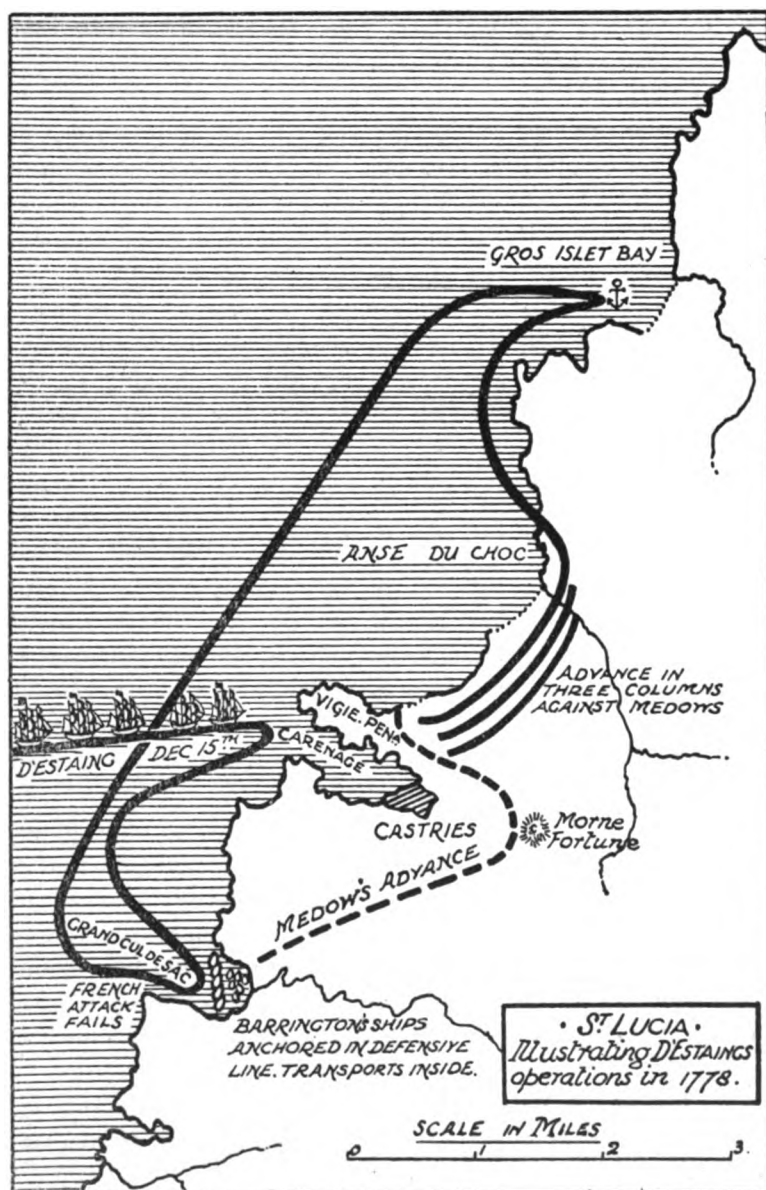
Once more the task of organising the landing fell to Hotham, and once more it was done well. One Brigade, under Brigadier-General Medows, advanced and captured the heights to the northward, and another Brigade, under Brigadier-General Prescott took up positions to protect the Bay. At daybreak next day, Dec. 14 Medows captured Morne Fortuné, where the Governor's House, the hospital and magazines were situated, and then advanced to the north and took possession of the Vigie Peninsula, which commanded the north side of the Carenage Harbour. A third Brigade, under Brigadier-General Sir Henry Calder, occupied several strong posts on the high land south of the Grand Cul de Sac.

The troops had hardly reached their positions, and Grant had only just occupied the Governor's House as his headquarters, when the *Ariadne*, frigate, was seen approaching under a cloud of sail, with the signal 'enemy in sight' flying.

It was a dramatic moment. Pringle, the frigate's captain, was soon on board the flagship, reporting to Barrington that a French fleet of twelve of the line and a number of frigates were in the offing, and shortly afterwards they came in sight. It was d'Estaing. He had arrived at Martinique twenty-four hours before Hotham had arrived at Barbados, and had found there a number of transports and 9,000 troops ready to operate wherever he wished.

His fleet was much superior to the British fleet on the station, and he planned to capture the British islands in the order Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent.

His small armada was on its way to Barbados when, despite Barrington's frigate 'blockade,' he received news of the situation



MAP XI

at St. Lucia, and he must have felt remarkably pleased with the news, for fortune had placed it in his power to crush all his enemy's forces, sea and land, at one blow. 1778

Grant and Barrington were not in the least dismayed, and set about with vigour to prepare for the onslaught of the greatly superior enemy. The military posts were strengthened, and Barrington, deciding to act as Howe had at New York, gave orders to his ships to anchor in line across the entrance to the Grand Cul de Sac with the transports inside.

Now that Hotham's squadron had joined, Barrington had seven ships of fifty guns or upwards, but his largest ship was a '74,' and the only one of this size was the *Prince of Wales*, his flagship.

On the morning of the 15th, d'Estaing, in the *Languedoc*, of ninety guns, led his fleet towards the entrance to the Carenage, and received a rude awakening when one of his ships was hit by a shot from the British batteries. He then decided to attack Barrington's fleet, which was arranged in good order across the Grand Cul de Sac with guns bearing to seaward. He sailed in with ten ships, but the line was still intact after the exchange of broadsides. He tried a second time with twelve ships and concentrated his efforts on the ships at the southern end of the harbour, but was again driven off. Dec. 15

The French commanders then adopted a new plan of operations, and decided to land the troops north of the British positions and attack from the land side. In accordance with this plan d'Estaing sailed up to Gros Islet Bay, and during the night about 9,000 troops were landed in Anse du Choc Bay. The first objective was Vigie Peninsula, where Medows was to a certain extent isolated from the Brigades under Calder and Prescott.

On the morning of the 16th the main body advanced in three columns, under d'Estaing, de Lowendahl, and de Bouillé, whilst other troops were detached to prevent reinforcements being sent to Medows. Dec. 16

The flat neck of land joining the Vigie Promontory with the mainland was commanded by the British guns, but the defenders could only muster 1,300 against the enemy's 5,000.

The French attacked three times with great dash, but the

1778 men before them were veterans who had been fighting continuously in America since the commencement of hostilities, and were under the leadership of a fine fighting veteran of the Seven Years War. After all the attacks had been broken with heavy loss, d'Estaing ordered a retirement.

The French casualties were very heavy ; 400 men were killed on the spot, 500 were dangerously wounded, and 600 slightly wounded. The British loss was thirteen killed and 158 wounded.

The French fleet did not assist, except for one ship of the line, which, on attempting to enter the Carenage, was driven off by the British batteries.

In the meantime, Barrington was still further strengthening his position. He closed his defensive line by warping his ships farther up the Bay, and landed guns from the fleet to mount batteries in commanding positions.

'Such a spirit of cheerfulness, unanimity and resolution,' he wrote, 'actuates the whole of our little force both by land and sea that we are under no apprehensions from any attempt the enemy may meditate.'<sup>1</sup>

When d'Estaing was apprised of Barrington's dispositions he decided to abandon the enterprise. He re-embarked his troops on the 28th, and to Barrington's 'utter astonishment'<sup>2</sup> set sail the Dec. 28. next day for Martinique where he arrived on the 30th.

On that day M. de Micoud, the Governor, sent a flag of truce to Grant, and the terms of capitulation were arranged and signed.

St. Lucia, with its easily defended and good harbour at Gros Islet Bay, thus passed into British hands early in the war, and though attempts at recapture were made it did not again change hands. The acquisition of this base only thirty miles from the enemy's main West Indian base at Fort Royal, Martinique, was to prove of inestimable value.

The capture of St. Lucia concluded the first phase of the battle for the islands. With the arrival of Byron's squadron in January the balance of forces was changed and a new phase commenced.

<sup>1</sup> Barrington's Despatch, '*Prince of Wales*, Grand Cul de Sac, December 23, 1778. At night.'

<sup>2</sup> Barrington's Despatch, '*Prince of Wales*, Grand Cul de Sac, January 6, 1779.'

Each side had captured an island possessing an important naval anchorage, but the British commanders had exhibited superior skill in their operations. 1778

When d'Estaing sailed from Martinique the ball was at his feet. He commanded a fleet vastly superior to anything that could challenge him, and an army of 9,000 men. The British islands, with their weak garrisons, were waiting to be snapped up one by one. Yet Grant's relatively weak army and Barrington's small squadron dispersed all his dreams of conquest. Space forbids a more detailed account of how Grant's veterans won the day against heavy odds. It is a story of courage, steadfastness and good leadership.

D'Estaing once more showed that he was easily deterred from using the power of his fleet to gain his object. He was a soldier first and foremost, and as such displayed the greatest gallantry when he decided to try his luck with a soldier's instead of a sailor's battle. He may have argued that, once Medows's defence was penetrated, his land guns would soon force the British ships to sea into the arms of an overpoweringly strong fleet. But it is difficult to believe that his heavy ships could not have done more against Barrington's defensive line. If that line had been broken, victory was undoubtedly to the French.

Suffren realised this, and wrote to the Admiral begging him to attack the British fleet, but his advice was not acceptable. D'Estaing was mortified by his failure. In January he wrote to the Minister of Marine :—

' Monseigneur, from failure to failure, and from one misfortune to another. The King's fleet, collected here, ready to conquer, has not been able to defend or even to retake St. Lucia. Seven enemy vessels moored across have by their position, by batteries on shore and especially by calm weather, resisted twelve. The profound grief that fills me will not influence my plans.

' But I will not conceal that my devotion to the King's service alone enables me to bear up against a series of overwhelming events ; circumstances have continually counteracted zeal and opportunities.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

1778      An outstanding feature of these operations was the importance of the time factor. If Grant and Barrington had not been determined men and sailed at once for St. Lucia, d'Estaing would have fallen on them at Barbados, his first objective. If there had been any time wasted between anchoring and landing the army, d'Estaing would have caught them in an extremely awkward position.

## CHAPTER IX

### EUROPEAN WATERS, 1778

WHILST Howe and Barrington were foiling d'Estaing's efforts to help the Americans in the Western Atlantic, the first clash between the rival fleets occurred in Home Waters. 1778

In 1776 Augustus Keppel, then a Vice-Admiral, was offered command of the Channel Fleet in the event of war with a continental power ; the enemy was no doubt specified as ' continental,' because Keppel, like so many other senior officers, had expressed his unwillingness to fight against the American colonists.

The Duke of Richmond evidently did not think the appointment a subject for congratulations.

' I cannot wish you joy,' he wrote to Keppel, ' of having a fleet to command, prepared by the Earl of Sandwich, with new men and officers, unacquainted with each other, to risk your reputation and the fate of your country upon, against a French and Spanish fleet who are, I fear, much better prepared. . . .

' Let me advise you to insist upon your own terms.

' No one can be surprised that you should suspect a minister whom you have constantly opposed, of not giving you all the help he might do to a friend, without suspecting him of treachery.

' If he has but a bad fleet to send out, 'tis doing Lord Sandwich no injustice to suppose he would be glad to put it under the command of a man whom he does not love. . . . If we meet with a misfortune he hopes to get off. . . . I would advise you to have the condition of each ship examined by your officers. . . . I would determine not to trust Lord Sandwich for a piece of ropeyarn, but have the most authentic returns in due form.' <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Life of Admiral Viscount Keppel* (Keppel).



1778 The appointment was the subject of a debate in the House of Lords and Chatham, whilst calling attention to lack of preparation, asked where the Admiral was to be found who would stake his reputation in command of the naval force that actually existed. Sandwich replied that Keppel was the man and, furthermore, one well acquainted with the state of the fleet. Lord Shelburne took exception to this statement, and asked whether Keppel had been 'thoroughly informed of the whole of the arrangement so pompously described by the noble Lord,' had approved of the officers who were to serve under him, and was satisfied with the 'inferior arrangements' of the fleet. He added that Keppel, being a man of action, would doubtless lead the fleet against the enemy, but that did not mean that he was willing to 'stake his credit on the issue.'

Mar. In March, 1778, Keppel went down to Portsmouth to take command of the fleet.

Sandwich had boasted in Parliament of 'thirty-five of the line, ready for service, and seven more in great forwardness' and, of these, Keppel expected to find twenty ready at Portsmouth. But he was disappointed. 'Of the twenty ships of the line, they are pleased to direct me to take under my command, I found at Spithead the *Prince George*, the *Princess Royal*, *Sandwich*, *Courageux* and *Hector* and in Portsmouth harbour the *Royal Oak*. Admiral Pye will do his best to bring the others forward.'<sup>1</sup>

He was more outspoken in his private correspondence and wrote that 'he found not more than six ships of the line assembled, and in any condition to go upon service' and even these few gave 'no pleasure to his seaman's eye.'

But he did not complain. He at once shouldered the difficult task of refitting and preparing for battle all the seaworthy ships he could lay hands on, and, by the beginning of May, he was in command of a fleet of some strength, but one untrained for war.

May On the 3rd of May he received orders from the Admiralty that he was not to proceed to sea, but instead to surrender ten ships which were to be prepared for foreign service.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, '*Prince George*, Spithead, March 27, 1778.'

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, '*Prince George*, Spithead, May 3, 1778.'

the dockyard received orders that the fitting out of ships for the West Indies was to take priority of everything else, and he had not only to transfer a large number of men, but also a quantity of running rigging, to Byron's squadron. 1778

At last, on the 13th of June, he was able to weigh and proceed down Channel with twenty sail of the line. June 13

His secret instructions can be summarised as follows : <sup>1</sup>

There is reason to believe that France has hostile intentions.

There is reason to believe the Toulon squadron will join the Brest squadron, and this junction should be prevented.

A troop convoy is leaving Portsmouth on the 24th, with reliefs for Gibraltar, and should be protected.

This convoy is to be escorted to the latitude of Ushant by the whole fleet, and for the remainder of its voyage by such ships as the Admiral considers desirable.

After the convoy has parted company, the fleet is to cruise off Brest, to prevent a junction of the enemy squadrons.

' If you fall in with or discover the Toulon squadron attempting to push into Brest, you are to use your utmost endeavours to take or destroy it ; and if the Brest squadron, or any part of it, should put to sea, you are to use the like endeavours to take or destroy such of the ships as you may be able to come up with.'

If the Brest squadron evades the fleet, and proceeds up the Channel or to Ireland, it is to be followed ; or if it proceeds in some other direction it is to be followed, provided the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland are not left exposed.

If any French frigates watch the motions of the fleet, they are to be seized and sent to England.

Some rich French ships are expected shortly from the East Indies ; they are to be captured.

If the Toulon squadron should join the Brest squadron, the combined French fleet is to be attacked if not markedly superior, but, if markedly superior to the British fleet, the latter is to return to St. Helen's for reinforcements.

Any Spanish ships acting in conjunction with the French Fleet are to be attacked.

<sup>1</sup> Given in full in *Life of Viscount Keppel* (T. Keppel).

1778      The two most interesting features of these orders are, that war between France and England had not been yet declared, and that, unless the Intelligencers on the continent were very inefficient, the Admiralty must have known that Keppel's fleet was not nearly strong enough for the tasks imposed.

By the orders Keppel was placed in exactly the same position as Boscawen at the beginning of the Seven Years War. Boscawen had been given orders to attack French ships, but Ministers had hoped that he would only fire the first shot if certain of a substantial success. In accordance with his instructions he had captured two unimportant enemy ships off Newfoundland, with unfortunate results, as the Dutch, accepting the French contention that the British had commenced hostilities, had refused to declare war on France in accordance with the terms of a Treaty.

Now exactly the same thing happened again, though this time the French were able to put the blame on their adversary's shoulders more by good fortune than by good intentions, as can be seen from d'Estaing's order to the frigate *Alcmene* dated the 12th of April, 1778.

'Nevertheless, should she be in a position to attack with advantage any British merchant fleet going to, or returning from, New England she should do so. She should place prize crews on board only that number of vessels as can be done without weakening herself too much, and should destroy the remainder. She will protect openly and treat as friends and allies, all ships belonging to the United States of America.'<sup>1</sup>

When twenty-five miles to the westward of the Lizard, Keppel sighted two French frigates. He at once detailed ships to go in chase and ordered the chasing ships to bring the frigates alongside the flagship. One surrendered but the other, the *Belle Poule*, 'at the very moment Lord Longford was upon the gunwale talking to the French captain in the most civil strain,'<sup>2</sup> discharged her full broadside into the *America*. After a fierce fight of two hours the French captain succeeded in towing his ship into a bay with his own boats.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Chevalier, *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, June 18, 1778.'

Keppel was only carrying out his orders, as these frigates were watching the fleet. The captains of the chasing ships endeavoured to persuade the French captains to surrender, but the captain of the *Belle Poule* was evidently a man of great courage, considering the overpowering forces in sight, and this spirited resistance placed the British Government in the position of aggressor. 1778

Two interesting documents were found on board the captured frigate, one, an order signed by Sartine that 'Captain Cook, the useful navigator, was on no account to be molested,' and the other, of vital import to Keppel, giving a list of the French squadron in Brest, which showed that no fewer than thirty-three of the line were there, under d'Orvilliers.

There was nothing for Keppel to do but obey his orders and return to England for reinforcements. He was 'manifestly inferior to the French fleet of twenty-seven to which six are to be added shortly' and felt obliged 'unpleasantly as I may feel upon the occasion to return to port. I am not bold enough, however my pride otherwise might have influenced me to risk the fate of England upon the appearance of such inferiority on the side of the English Fleet.'<sup>1</sup> He anchored in St. Helen's on the 27th of June. June 27

Thanks to the arrival of a West Indian fleet, men were found to man the reinforcements, and on the 11th of July Keppel proceeded down Channel with twenty-six ships of the line, organised in three divisions commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harland, Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, and himself. Four additional ships of the line joined the flag off Plymouth. July 11

Even at this juncture Keppel was not certain how he should act towards French ships. 'I observe,' he wrote, 'His Majesty has thought proper to extend the acts of hostility towards France, in case of my having taken any French ship of the line. Since that, the circumstance of the seizure of the French frigates requires some further directions. I must ask whether it is His Majesty's pleasure that I seize in future such frigates.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory, Lizard N. 12 E, 19 leagues, June 21.'

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, 'Victory, July 4th, 1778.'

1778  
July 10

On the 10th of July the French King wrote to the Duc de Penthièvre, Admiral of France, authorising him to attack British ships, and orders were at once sent to d'Orvilliers, the Commander-in-Chief of the Brest Fleet, to proceed to sea.

D'Orvilliers was sixty-eight years of age. As a Captain he had served under Galissonnière and de la Motte in the Seven Years War, and in 1777 had succeeded Du Chaffault in command of the principal fleet. His immediate juniors were the Comte du Chaffault and the Duc de Chartres, afterwards the Duc d'Orléans.

The tenor of d'Orvilliers' orders can be seen from the following letter he wrote just before sailing: 'Since you leave me free to continue my cruise, I will not bring the fleet back to Brest, unless by positive orders, until I have fulfilled the month at sea mentioned in my instructions and known to all the Captains. Till then, I will not fly before Admiral Keppel, whatever his strength; only, if I know him to be too superior, I will avoid a disproportionate action as well as I can; but if the enemy really seeks to force it, it will be very hard to shun.'<sup>1</sup>

The French Ministry knew that Keppel's fleet was not superior, but expected that Byron and Keppel would join forces and remain together until the issue between the main fleets was decided.

They must have been strange orders. The fleet was to remain at sea for a month with no special object except to avoid action with a superior force. Doubtless the Minister of Marine found difficulty in drafting these orders, as the function of the main fleet was a subject of controversy amongst French seamen of the day.

Kerguelen, the celebrated Australian explorer, wrote to the Minister:—

'I consider that if Spain does not declare war you would be well advised not to send the heavy squadrons to sea, and not to risk decisive actions. I believe that forty ships in the Brest Roads and troops on the coast would do more harm to England than if they were at sea because they would force the enemy to arm sixty ships of the line; but it will be necessary to have

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Chevalier in *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

several ships and many frigates in order to destroy their trade by sustained cruising. 1778

‘ If we get the worst of it in the first important action, we will be lost.’<sup>1</sup>

La Motte-Picquet, who commanded a squadron with distinction during the war, expressed the same view. ‘ The surest way of conquering the English is to attack them through their trade. There is no need to fear that a squadron of six good ships and several frigates would be cut off. The precautions which long experience would suggest to me will protect me from such a misfortune.’<sup>2</sup>

Again, in 1780, a naval officer wrote, ‘ Twelve well-armed warships cruising, in the way Duguay-Trouin did, between the 45th and 50th degrees of latitude, would do more harm than all our forces concentrated during the whole summer campaign.’<sup>3</sup>

Though his orders enjoined a defensive policy, d’Orvilliers found no lack of proper spirit amongst the officers. To the Minister he wrote on the 9th of July : ‘ The Admirals and Captains assembled on board the *Bretagne* to hear the King’s orders gave me fresh assurance of their zeal, and, headed by the Duc de Chartres, begged me to ask you to obtain the King’s permission to enter the Channel and attack Admiral Keppel even in his anchorage if he does not put to sea.’<sup>4</sup>

The French fleet was ready for sea when the sailing orders arrived, and d’Orvilliers, with thirty-two sail of the line, was clear of the harbour by the evening of the 10th, the day before July 10 Keppel sailed from Portsmouth.<sup>4</sup>

On the afternoon of the 23rd of July, when about sixty-six July 23 miles west of Ushant, Keppel sighted the French fleet to leeward, on a south-westerly course, the wind being north-westerly. He at once formed line of battle. The weather was foggy but about 4 P.M. the fog lifted and the French fleet were seen to be ‘ standing from the King’s fleet.’<sup>5</sup> An hour later the French fleet tacked

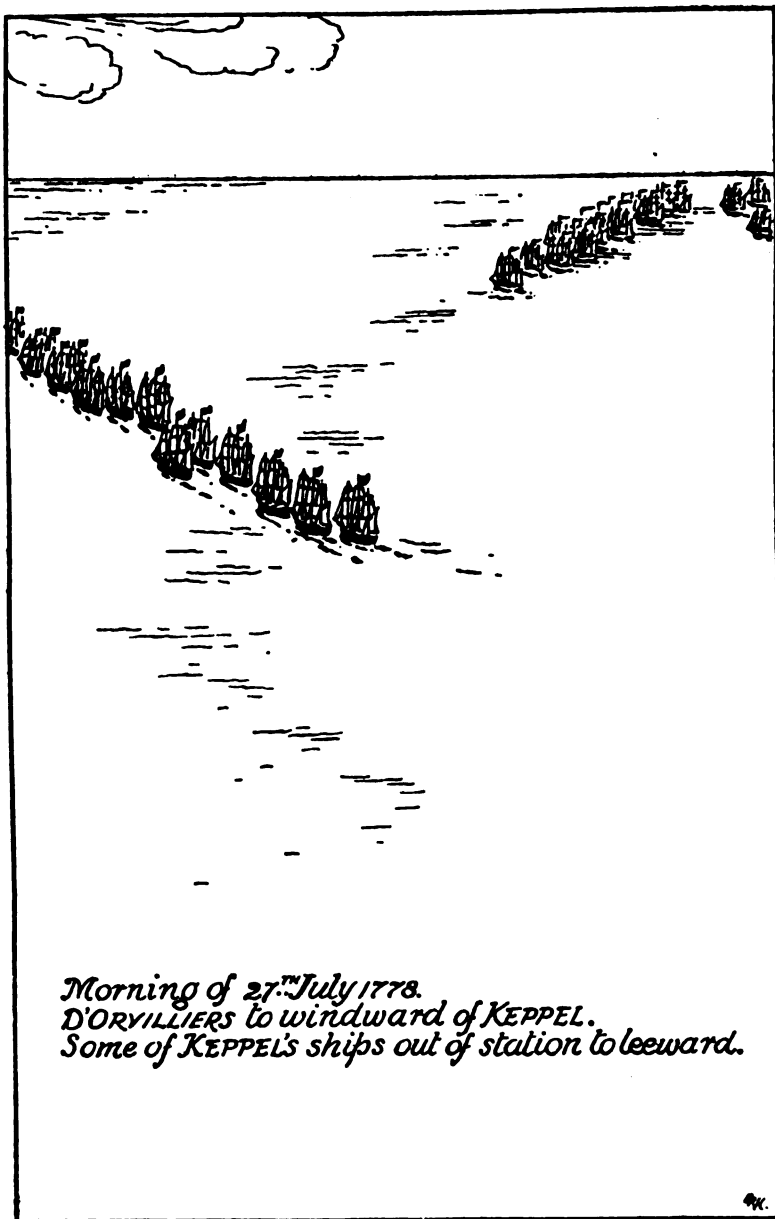
<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Chevalier in *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Castex in *Les Idées militaires du XVIII<sup>me</sup> siècle*.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Chevalier in *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

<sup>4</sup> For details, see Appendix VI.

<sup>5</sup> Keppel’s Despatch, ‘ Victory, at sea, July 23, 1778.’

DIAGRAM 2.—BATTLE OF USHANT, JULY 27<sup>TH</sup>, 1778, MORNING

and stood towards Keppel's line but 'as action in the night is always to be avoided,' Keppel brought to.<sup>1</sup> 1778

During the night d'Orvilliers worked to windward, and in the morning bore north-west from Keppel, who thus had lost the weather position but was between the enemy and his base.

Next morning two French ships, which had got separated from the fleet during the night, were sighted to leeward, and Keppel ordered them to be chased in the hopes that d'Orvilliers would run down to their assistance, but the French Admiral was not to be caught that way. For the next two days the fleets remained in sight of one another, the French using the advantage of the weather-gauge to keep to windward of the British.<sup>2</sup>

On the morning of the 27th the two fleets were about six miles apart, d'Orvilliers still dead to windward, and both steering west-north-west. (Diagram No. 2.) July 27

As the British fleet was not in regular formation, Palliser's division being some distance to leeward, Keppel ordered six or seven ships of that division to work up to windward so that they would be in a better position for joining him if he could force an action.

D'Orvilliers, seeing this movement, and suspecting an intention to attack his rear, wore in succession and steered a southerly course on the port tack. Whilst engaged in this manœuvre the wind backed to the south-south-west, and this enabled Keppel to steer more directly for his enemy. When nearly across the wake of the French fleet, Keppel tacked and chased to the south.

This manœuvre placed d'Orvilliers in a disadvantageous position as the leading British ships would soon come up with his rear ships and be able to bring overpowering gunfire to bear by attacking from both sides. He therefore decided to turn and meet his enemy, and accordingly wore round and stood back on a northerly course, with the result that the two fleets passed one another on opposite courses. (Diagram No. 3.)

Keppel was sailing as close to the wind as he could, and the

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, July 24, 1778.'

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, July 30, 1778.'



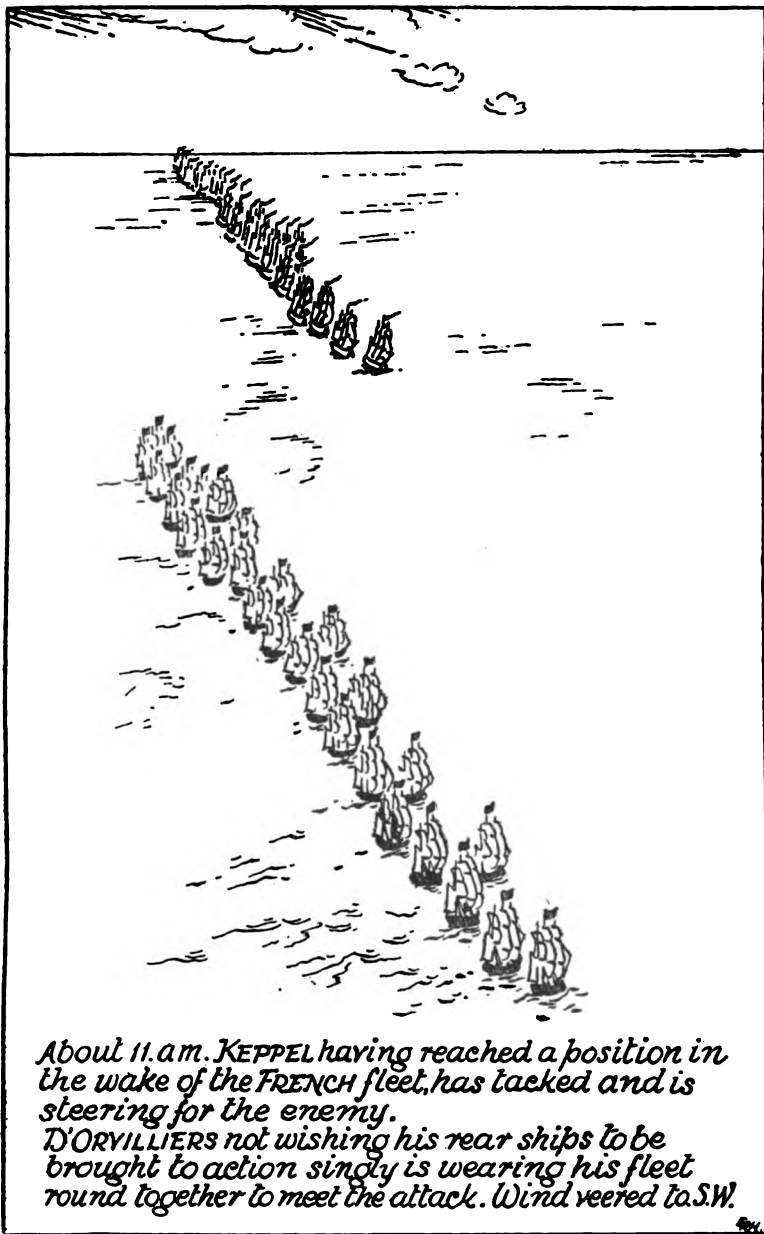


DIAGRAM 3.—BATTLE OF USHANT, JULY 27TH, 1778, 11 A.M.

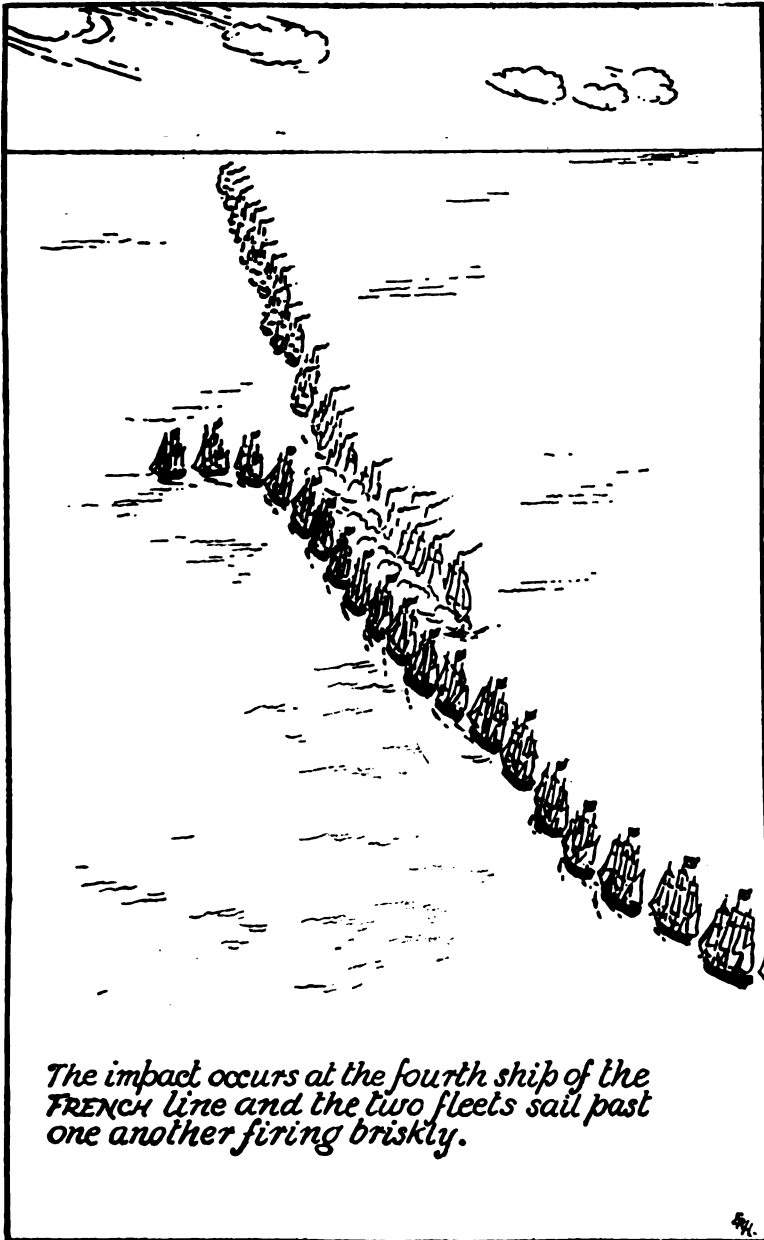


DIAGRAM 4.—BATTLE OF USHANT, JULY 27TH, 1778, 11.30 A.M.

1778 decision to fight or not to fight rested with d'Orvilliers who, still intent on avoiding close action, ordered his ships to sail closer to the wind.

It thus came about that the three leading French ships passed out of range, and the battle was commenced by the broadsides of the fourth ship in the line. (Diagram No. 4.)

A brisk cannonade took place as the ships passed each other under reduced sail, but by 1 P.M. the flagship *Victory* was clear of the enemy's line, and Keppel then decided to turn his fleet and endeavour to renew the action. Harland, who was in the van, had cleared some time before, and, anticipating Keppel's order, had tacked, and was already steering for the enemy.

Keppel then made the signal to form line of battle on the new course, but injuries to rigging prevented his ships getting into station for some time, and four or five unmanageable ships were down to leeward, and evidently out of the fight. D'Orvilliers, seeing this mêlée of ships astern of him, decided to take advantage of his opponent's disorder and turn his fleet to the southward by wearing in succession, but the signal was either not seen or not obeyed by the Duc de Chartres, and by the time the order was executed the favourable moment had passed. As soon as Keppel detected his opponent's move he turned his fleet to the southwards to protect his damaged ships, and kept the signal for his line of battle flying.

After this turn, Palliser, whose ship had been damaged, began to work up to windward, and consequently to drop astern of the main body, and the ships of his division, instead of obeying Keppel's signal for line of battle, took station on their divisional leader.

The two opposing fleets were once more converging, and Keppel, burning to renew the fight, found himself deprived of a large part of his fleet. He made signals, he sent a frigate to Palliser with urgent orders, and finally signalled each of Palliser's ships individually to rejoin him. (Diagram No. 5.)

This last measure brought about the desired result, but it was then too late to renew the action, and d'Orvilliers contented

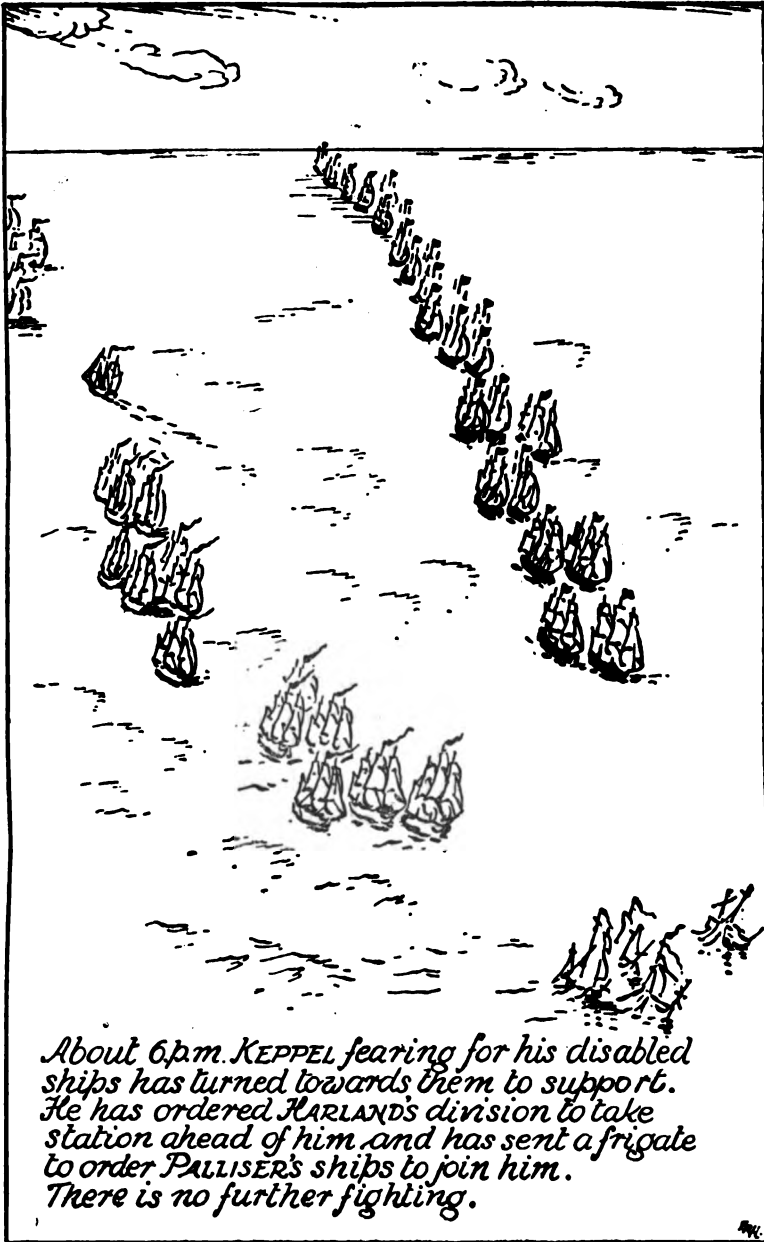


DIAGRAM 5.—BATTLE OF USHANT, JULY 27TH, 1778, EVENING

1778 himself with 'ranging his fleet in a line to leeward of the King's Fleet.'<sup>1</sup>

During the night d'Orvilliers altered course for Brest, leaving three ships behind with Admiral's lights burning as a ruse, and Keppel, finding no enemy ships in sight at daylight, and having last seen them to leeward, shaped course for Plymouth. He had no doubt that he had won the day. He had 'allowed the French fleet' to form at the close of the day 'without firing upon them thinking they meant handsomely to try their force with us next morning but they had been so beaten in the day that they took the advantage of the night to go off.'<sup>1</sup>

The first meeting between big fleets thus ended, after four days' manœuvring, in nothing more than a 'brush.' The British casualties were 133 killed, 375 wounded; the French 163 killed and 573 wounded. There was not much difference between the casualty lists, but there was a very great difference in the state of the ships. D'Orvilliers, at the close of the day, was still able to manœuvre his fleet, and the ships were in good order, whilst a number of Keppel's ships were incapable of taking their place in the line. It was the French custom to shoot high at rigging and spars in order to render their enemy immobile, and this was the primary cause of the damage to the British ships. 'The object of the French ships seemed to be the disabling of the King's ships in their masts and sails in which they so far succeeded as to prevent many of the ships of my fleet being able to follow.'<sup>1</sup> This method of using the broadsides was by no means new. In the three actions between Pocock and D'Aché during the Seven Years War, the British ships were immobile when firing ceased, whilst the French ships sailed away with the greater number of casualties. It was, however, a method that could never lead to decisive results.

In quitting the battlefield just at the moment when he had gained a considerable advantage over his opponent, d'Orvilliers showed an extraordinary lack of offensive spirit. There is no doubt that he meant to avoid action up to the moment when he

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, July 30, 1778.'

saw that the British fleet was divided. The chance then presented of falling on a very inferior force was one he was willing to take. 1778

When the fleets first passed one another on opposite courses he held the weather position, and could, at any moment, have brought about a decisive battle, but instead he signalled to his leading ships to sail closer to the wind, with the result that they drew away from the oncoming British fleet.

But for the failure of the Duc de Chartres, d'Orvilliers might have accomplished something, as the British fleet were in considerable disorder during and after their turn to the north. It is, however, doubtful if he would have taken full advantage of the situation, as his retirement to Brest, with a fleet still capable of manœuvring and fighting, proved that he did not wish for close action or decisive combat.

Keppel's one object throughout was to attack, but he was severely handicapped by having ships under his command that had been hastily collected at the last moment, and consequently had never been trained for fleet work. He had to use a signal table that was quite inadequate for manœuvring. On the morning of the 27th the only signal available to bring Palliser's division into better station was 'chase to windward,' which might be interpreted in different ways by different captains. Again, when he wished to tell Harland to take the van position after the turn to the north, there was no suitable signal, and he had to send a message by frigate. The same thing happened later on when he turned south and wished to get Harland ahead of him. But worst of all was the invaluable time lost in sending a frigate to Palliser when he dropped out of supporting distance and failed to obey the signal flying at the Admiral's masthead. It says much for Keppel that he was undismayed when so many of his ships lost their full sailing power and was still intent on seeking battle when Palliser's division failed him.

He was criticised for not making a special signal to each individual ship of Palliser's squadron earlier. When he eventually made the signals, the ships left the Vice-Admiral and filled their sails to join him, but the Captains of the ships should have seen

1778 what was required and should have realised that by remaining with their divisional flagship they were keeping away from any chance of renewing the fight.

It is easy to imagine Keppel's anger and dismay when all his efforts to bring up Palliser's ships in line failed. The unfortunate Byng at Minorca had gone through much the same agony when he had been unable to get his leading ship to close the enemy and begin the action.

It may have been pedantry, it may have been stupidity, or it may have been lack of offensive spirit, but one thing is certain, the Captains of the laggard ships failed their Admiral in battle.

Harland proved himself a leader of initiative and good judgment when, anticipating Keppel's intention, he turned as soon as he was clear of the enemy's line. He evidently had no doubt that his Admiral would try to come to grips again.

July 31 Keppel arrived at Plymouth on the 31st of July and proceeded with the repair of the fleet. It was no easy task. The necessary spars were not forthcoming, and the dockyard reserves were so low that he asked permission to dismantle a ship to obtain the necessary stores.

This wretched state of affairs was debated in Parliament. Sandwich made a typical reply to his critics. 'Much stress has been laid upon the delay of the refit of the Western Squadron after its return into port subsequent to the engagement of the 27th of July; but, my Lords, I contend it was not the want of naval stores that occasioned the delay, but, as I said before, our fleet was so beaten and suffered so much more than the French.' As a marginal note on his copy of the proceedings Keppel wrote, 'Impudent assertion!'

Aug. 20 By the 20th of August the fleet was ready for sea and Keppel hoped to try conclusions once more with d'Orvilliers. 'I shall have very great satisfaction in carrying the very same ships in quest of the enemies fleet that came into port with me, having the fullest confidence in the zeal, bravery and execution of every officer in the fleet as well as men serving in it.'<sup>1</sup> He was doubtless piqued by intelligence that 'the people of France have been

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, 'Victory, Cawsand Bay, August 20, 1778.'

encouraged to believe that there could not be an English ship of war in these seas since the battle with their fleet of 27th July.' <sup>1</sup> 1778

The fleet got under way on the 23rd and, when off the Eddystone, information was received from a Portuguese ship that a French fleet of thirty-nine sail had been sighted thirty-six miles west of Ushant on the 22nd. Keppel at once shaped course in quest of his enemy. Aug. 23

He was off Ushant from the 28th to the 31st but saw nothing of the French fleet. He then made north to a rendezvous near the Scillies and sent a frigate to Cape Ortegal to search for d'Orvilliers. Defence of trade was given him as a primary object, and he could not leave the Channel approaches unguarded unless he received definite information of the enemy.

On the 15th of September he wrote, 'Their Lordships will be surprised to hear that the French fleet was seen 29th of August off Cape Finisterre after all their gasconade of having sailed "pour croiser à l'entrée de la Manche et pour attaquer les anglais partout."' <sup>2</sup> Sept. 15

On the 20th he despatched another frigate to the south in search of the enemy. By the 27th his supplies were running out and he wrote that he was unable 'to keep longer at sea than five or six days beyond the 12th of the month.' <sup>3</sup> But he held on as long as possible and, when his water supply was almost gone, sailed up Channel and anchored at Spithead on the 26th of October. D'Orvilliers was actually cruising between Brest and Finisterre from the 18th of August to the 20th of September and it was no doubt lack of frigates that prevented Keppel locating him. Oct. 26

The French Admiral on his part concluded that Keppel was avoiding him. 'I cannot believe,' he wrote to Sartine, 'that the English have any serious intentions of meeting us. The French fleet has continually made their presence known by frequent gun signals and fireworks at night. At last, in returning to Brest, we made our landfall at Ushant, where the English fleet would have made certain of meeting us and where we saw no sign of

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, 'Victory, Cawsand Bay, August 21, 1778.'

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, September 15, 1778.'

<sup>3</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, September 27, 1778.'



1778 them.' <sup>1</sup> If his sole intention was to meet Keppel, he chose the wrong cruising area.

Keppel's despatch to the Admiralty on the action of the 27th of July was short and to the point. Of the personnel he wrote:—'The spirited conduct of the Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Harland, Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser, and the Captain of the Fleet, supported by their officers and men, deserves much commendation.' <sup>2</sup> He certainly showed great forbearance.

It was not long before events took an ugly turn. Rumours were evidently rife shortly after Keppel anchored at Plymouth. Samuel Hood, Commissioner of Portsmouth Dockyard, in a letter to the Admiralty official, dated the 4th of August, wrote:—'The master of a Plymouth trader that came here yesterday talks very strangely of reports at Plymouth of an unpleasant disagreement between the Chief and one of the Vice-Admirals. I don't like it.' <sup>3</sup> A fortnight later, the Duke of Richmond, in a postscript to a letter to Keppel, wrote:—'There are reports at Portsmouth of some misunderstanding between you and Sir Hugh Palliser.' <sup>4</sup>

The only action Keppel took after his unfortunate experience was to issue the following memorandum to his Captains:—'The Admiral recommends it most particularly to the Captains of the ships under his command that they at all times close in with the body of the fleet in their several stations, as near as the nature of winds and weather will permit, as it may be of the utmost consequence upon falling suddenly and unexpectedly in with the enemy's fleet in great force, for the King's fleet to be in a collected body.' <sup>4</sup>

The Press was not slow in finding out that something was amiss, and shortly before the fleet arrived after its second cruise, the *Morning Intelligencer* published an article on the action, and stated that failure to achieve victory was due to Palliser's defection.

Palliser at once wrote a letter in reply which he sent to Keppel

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Chevalier in *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, July 30, 1778.'

<sup>3</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Portsmouth Dockyard, August 4, 1778' (N.R.S. vol. iii.). George Jackson was Second Secretary to the Admiralty, 1766-1782.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Life of Viscount Keppel* (Keppel).

with a request that he would sign it. The letter not only refuted the accusations in the article, but stated that Keppel had not intended to renew the action that day. Keppel refused, and Palliser thereupon wrote an article for the *Morning Post*, which was then edited by a certain Reverend Henry Bate, who was referred to in the House of Lords as 'a base libeller,' and 'a miscreant to be held in the greatest abhorrence, contempt and detestation.' This called forth an interesting letter from John Jervis (afterwards Lord St. Vincent) who, amongst other things, pertinently asked why Palliser did not shift his flag when he found his ship had lost its sailing power. Palliser, until now, had been a man highly esteemed in the Navy. He had fought in many engagements, and had greatly distinguished himself at the taking of Quebec, but Keppel and he were bitter political opponents, and the controversy soon reached Parliament. 1778

When Parliament assembled, Lord Bristol asked for an enquiry, and an animated debate took place in both Houses, during which both Keppel and Palliser defended themselves. Shortly afterwards, to Keppel's amazement, he received an intimation from the Secretary of the Admiralty that he was to be court-martialled.

This led to another acrimonious debate in Parliament. The majority of the senior Admirals, headed by the veteran Hawke, prepared a memorial for presentation to the King. This memorial represented in strong terms that, as Palliser was a member of the Board of Admiralty, and Keppel's junior in the action, the Board had no right to order the court-martial. The King gave it 'his most serious attention' but took no action.

On the 2nd of January Keppel was taken into custody, and the court-martial was held on board the *Britannia* at Portsmouth, under the Presidency of Admiral Sir Thomas Pyle. Jan. 2

The charges are of interest, and can be summarised as follows :

That he attacked in disorder.

That he did not immediately turn after the fleets had passed by one another.

That the last turn towards his damaged ships was 'disgraceful to the British Flag,' and was a flight from the enemy.

1778      That he did not pursue those of the enemy who were in sight next morning.

The charges were so framed that, if found guilty on any one, the Court, under the existing regulations, would have no option but to condemn Keppel to death. It was a change of fortune for Keppel, who had been a member of the Court that, having no other choice, had condemned Byng to death.

The court-martial was full of incident. Early in the proceedings examination of witnesses brought to light that the log of one ship had been altered, that two leaves from another had been torn out, and that three vital pages of the log of Palliser's flagship were missing.

Most unusual questions were asked the witnesses, and emotional scenes were frequent. An eye-witness, describing a certain Captain's demeanour when he was asked whether Keppel had 'conducted himself as an Admiral should,' wrote :—'labouring under the awful impression of the oath he had taken, and visibly agitated with the mixed sensations that arose at the moment in his breast, he solemnly raised his hands to Heaven, fixed his eyes on his Admiral, and, with a voice that spoke his feelings, cried out, "No, as God is my Judge."' The same vivid writer describes the scene when Rear-Admiral Campbell, who was in Keppel's flagship, was giving evidence. 'Never was there an exhibition of any scene more truly affecting, more noble, or more manly than the examination of the good old Admiral Campbell. United to one another by the strictest ties of the dearest friendship, the noble prisoner and he formed a picture the most sympathetic and expressive. Labouring with that variety of passions that the occasion of their meeting at the bar naturally created, they became too powerful for restraint. While the Rear-Admiral answered his friend's question, respecting his having negligently performed his duty, he wiped away the tears from his cheek and could hardly articulate his words.'

The prosecutor's questions were frequently objected to, and a good deal of warmth resulted. Keppel made a spirited defence, and the majority of the Captains appeared on his side, one of the most emphatic being John Jervis. On the 11th of February the

Court announced their verdict, which was one of honourable acquittal on all the charges. 1778

Remarkable and unprecedented scenes followed the rising of the Court. Guns were fired, processions formed, people sported ribbons with 'Keppel' in gold letters which had been prepared by various peeresses, dinners and dances were given in Keppel's honour, the town was illuminated, and in London mobs attacked the houses of those they believed to be Keppel's enemies. Lord North's windows were broken, Palliser's house was sacked and his effigy burnt on Tower Hill. Order was finally restored by military patrols. A reminder of these events is to be found to-day in the many public-houses called after the Admiral.

On the day after his acquittal both Houses of Parliament voted him their thanks. But though he had received such a wonderful proof of the people's trust in him, he was so disgusted with the Board of Admiralty that he requested to be relieved. 'It is next to impossible,' he wrote, 'for me to render creditable and beneficial service to the nation by my continuing in command of the Western Squadron under the direction and authority of those whose approbation in the execution of my duty and support afterwards, experience has taught me I can not depend on.'<sup>1</sup> He hauled his flag down on the 18th of March and was not employed again till 1782, when he became First Lord.

He had one last dig at the administration he so hated when acknowledging the order to haul down his flag. 'The order of the Lords Commissioners dated the 18th instant directing and requiring me to strike my flag and come on shore I received with satisfaction because it relieves me from further correspondence with the present Board of Admiralty. Yet, I must observe, there is so much offence conceived in the expression of your letter, written by the Lords' directions, that nothing less than the deference due from me to the Board of Admiralty would prevent my replying in terms that would not be pleasing to their Lordships.'<sup>2</sup>

It was Palliser's turn next. He had resigned his seat on the

<sup>1</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, 'Bath, March 15, 1779.'

<sup>2</sup> Keppel's letter to Admiralty, 'Bath, March 21, 1779.'

1778 Board in obedience to popular demand, and the Admiralty ordered a court-martial to be held on the 12th of April at Portsmouth, under the Presidency of Vice-Admiral George Darby. There was no specific charge, but the Court was ordered to investigate circumstances of an incriminating nature which had been divulged at Keppel's trial.

The Court found that his conduct and behaviour during the action had been highly exemplary and meritorious, but that he should have let Keppel know his ship was disabled, which could have been done by the same frigate that brought the order to rejoin the Flag. Notwithstanding this omission the Court acquitted him. Palliser was shortly afterwards appointed Governor of Greenwich Hospital, an appointment that led to acrid debates in the House of Commons, instigated by Fox.

The events subsequent to the Battle of Ushant fill a discreditable page of naval history. In the same year the services of Keppel and Howe, two of the tried leaders left in the legacy of the Seven Years War, were lost to the country by the inefficiency and vacillation of the Administration and the evil influence of politics on the services.

Senior naval officers shunned appointments, as they had no confidence in the Government and knew they would be made scapegoats on the first sign of failure to achieve the impossible.

But a successor for Keppel had to be found, and the Government's choice fell on Sir Charles Hardy, a veteran officer who was physically unfit for the task.

After the Battle of Ushant France took serious steps to protect her convoys to the Indies.

Hitherto the convoys had been covered at the European terminus by the French main fleet and light craft acting under its shadow, but had been left to their own devices for the rest of the voyage. D'Estaing's arrival in the West Indies provided a force at the other terminus. In September, 1778, regular coastal convoys were started in response to an agitation by the merchants of the seaports who had suffered heavily from the depredations of British privateers. These measures were inadequate, and early in 1779 the Ministry was in a great state of anxiety about

the homecoming convoys. This can be plainly seen in the Minister's despatches to d'Orvilliers :— 1778

' You can imagine how anxious I am regarding the fate of more than one hundred vessels which left San Domingo or Martinique and which were not escorted to France.

' You have observed in the orders sent you by special courier the methods which you should employ in order to give as much protection as possible to the arrival of these ships.

' I have authorised you, and I authorise you again, to send out everything at your disposal.

' Why has she (a frigate) returned if she has not been damaged ? I request that you will give precise orders to the Captains to keep the sea.' <sup>1</sup>

As greater protection was evidently necessary, a policy of escorting Atlantic convoys by ships of war was adopted. On one occasion five ships of the line and three frigates under La Motte Picquet were detached for this work owing to the special value of an Ile D'Aix convoy.

In the West Indies the merchants had prevailed upon d'Estaing to institute a local convoy system, and in February, 1779, the first organised convoy, consisting of forty-five vessels escorted by three frigates, sailed for home.

During the year the celebrated Paul Jones commenced his romantic career. His first command was the *Ranger*, mounting eighteen carriage guns, with a crew of 150 men. Early in April he took several prizes off the coast of Scotland ; he then nearly succeeded in burning up the shipping off Whitehaven. His next port of call was St. Mary's Isle near Kirkcudbright, where he carried off Lord Selkirk's plate. From there he sailed to Belfast Lough where he captured a number of fishing vessels. He defeated a British 14-gun sloop which brought him to action near Carrickfergus, and returned to France after a daring and successful cruise.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lieutenant de Vaisseau P. Auphin in *Revue Maritime*.

## CHAPTER X

### THE FIGHT FOR THE WEST INDIAN ISLANDS SECOND PHASE, 1779

1779 THE arrival of Byron at St. Lucia early in January, after a very stormy passage, adjusted to some extent the balance of forces in the West Indies. With Barrington's force he could count on twenty-one ships of the line, but his only big ship was the flagship, *Princess Royal*, of ninety guns.<sup>1</sup> Rear-Admirals Barrington, Hyde Parker, and Rowley were the three divisional leaders, and amongst the Captains was Carkett, the hero of the action with the *Foudroyant* off Cartagena in the Seven Years War. Finding 'neither provisions or stores in these parts' he had to place his ships companies on two-thirds allowance,<sup>2</sup> which was singularly unfortunate when hard work lay ahead of them.

Byron's first action was to station frigates to watch the French  
Jan. 12 fleet, and early in the morning of the 12th of January one of the look-outs sailed in with the signal flying for 'enemy in sight.'

It was d'Estaing, who, on receiving information that Byron's ships were divided between the two harbours, Carenage and Grand Cul de Sac, had decided to take the offensive.

Byron at once got under way, and d'Estaing, on sighting him, hurried back to Fort Royal. Byron then sent Rowley with seven of the line to cruise to windward of Martinique to intercept any supply ships whilst he with the remainder of the fleet anchored in Gros Islet Bay which was 'a better position for watching, being 3-4 leagues to windward and gives a better chance of cutting off the reinforcement they expect under M. Tréville should it come round south of Martinique.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix VIII.

<sup>2</sup> Byron's Despatch, '*Princess Royal*, St. Lucia, January 7, 1779.'

<sup>3</sup> Byron's Despatch, '*Princess Royal*, Gros Islet Bay, February 4, 1779.'

Weak strategy in Home Waters was having its effect on the further side of the Atlantic. There was no blockade of the French home ports, and squadrons could sail at will. 1779

On the 19th of February de Grasse arrived at Martinique with four sail of the line and a number of storeships. This reinforcement equalised the two fleets, and Byron recalled Rowley, who had arrived at his station just too late to intercept de Grasse. It was necessary to keep the fleet concentrated, and Byron contented himself with sending out occasional detachments to cruise for enemy commerce and watch d'Estaing. There was a heavy sick list in the fleet as 'fresh meat and proper nourishment were not procurable' and he had to ask Grant for 574 soldiers to complete complements. During March, one of these detachments was carried by the current to leeward of Martinique, and d'Estaing came out with his whole fleet to try to cut it off. Byron at once slipped his cables and proceeded out, but d'Estaing was not seeking action and returned to harbour. Feb. 19 Mar. 18

On the 26th of April de Vaudreuil arrived with two of the line and five frigates, having taken Senegal during his voyage out. The French fleet was gradually working up to a definite superiority, and was concentrating in safety under the guns of Fort Royal. April 26

On the 25th of May Byron received news from the Admiralty of a squadron under La Motte Picquet that had left Brest for the West Indies. Having obtained a further 500 men from Grant he sailed to try and intercept this reinforcement. But after cruising for five days to windward of Martinique he was compelled to leave his fine strategical position in order to safeguard the ships collecting at St. Kitts to form the big homeward-bound convoy. Profiting by his absence, d'Estaing sent 400 men in command of the Chevalier du Romain to attack St. Vincent. Romain landed on the island on the 16th of June. The Governor and Council were at variance and the troops dispersed over the island, so terms of capitulation were arranged. May 25 June

On the 27th of June, d'Estaing's fleet was still further increased by the arrival of Commodore La Motte Picquet with a squadron of five of the line, three frigates, and a large convoy of June 27



1779 forty-five merchantmen. La Motte Picquet had established a great reputation by his conduct in several single-ship actions, and had been Flag-Captain to the Duc de Chartres at the Battle of Ushant.

The arrival of the convoy saved the situation as the resources of the island were nearly at an end. D'Estaing wrote: 'The convoy has arrived; these four words tell everything.'

June 30 The French Admiral at once got busy with his next project of conquest, and on the 30th sailed with his whole fleet of twenty-five sail of the line and twelve frigates carrying 5,500 troops in addition to their seamen complements. His first intention was to attack Barbados, but persistent adverse winds caused July 2 a change of plans, and he anchored off Grenada on the 2nd of July.

Lord Macartney, the Governor, decided to hold Hospital Hill on account of its commanding position, but he only had 159 regulars and 300 militia to oppose the large French forces. One July 3 sloop, the *Lark*, represented the naval forces. Next day d'Estaing sent a summons to Macartney, but the latter was determined to fight it out. In the afternoon, three columns under d'Estaing, Count Arthur Dillon, and the Viscount de Noailles advanced to the attack, whilst seven ships of the line bombarded the citadel from seaward. It was too much for the few defenders, and Macartney had to accept terms of capitulation. The French captures included thirty merchant ships with valuable cargoes and the sloop.

July 1 In the meantime Byron had seen the big convoy safely on its way, and had arrived on the 1st of July at St. Lucia, where he received news of the loss of St. Vincent. He and Grant had just got out the orders for an operation to recapture the island when a frigate came in to report that she had sighted the French fleet to leeward steering for Grenada. Byron at once sent off a despatch vessel to inform Macartney that the French fleet had been sighted, and to assure him he would come to his support if he heard either at St. Vincent, or on the voyage there that Grenada was the French objective.

He also sent a frigate to look into Fort Royal, but the enemy

frigates prevented a close reconnaissance, and an incorrect report that there were thirteen ships of war in the anchorage led Byron to believe that d'Estaing had not got his whole fleet with him. 1779

Byron sailed on the 3rd of July with twenty-one sail of the line, a frigate, fourteen transports, four ordnance vessels, four hospital ships, two convalescent ships, three victuallers, and a horse ship, and shaped course for St. Vincent. Next day a schooner brought him definite news of the French fleet but gave the numbers as 'eight ships of the line' and he altered course for Grenada.

On the 5th he spoke two Grenada schooners who informed July 5 him of the invasion of the island, but gave contradictory reports as to the strength of the French fleet.

That night a French frigate sighted the British fleet, and on receiving her report d'Estaing prepared to weigh.

On approaching the island, Byron detached Rowley, with three ships of the line (*Suffolk*, *Viligant*, and *Monmouth*) to guard the transports whilst he sailed on ahead with the remainder of the fleet to make the entrance of St. George's Harbour in the morning. 'Rowley was to join me with these ships if I saw occasion for their service.'<sup>1</sup>

Soon after daybreak he sighted the French fleet getting under way and apparently in some confusion as there was little wind. Ignorant of the strength of the enemy fleet, and quick to seize the chance of attacking before d'Estaing could form line of battle, he signalled the 'General chase' and called up Rowley's three ships to assist. (Diagram No. 6.) July 6

He then made the signal to 'Engage,' and ordered his ships to form as they came up, 'as not more than fourteen or fifteen of the enemy's ships appeared to be of the line.'<sup>1</sup> In consequence of these signals, the faster sailers drew ahead, and Barrington in the *Prince of Wales*, Sawyer in the *Boyne*, and Gardner in the *Sultan* were under fire from the French fleet at 7 A.M. and suffered considerable losses.

The breeze strengthened during the approach, and enabled the French fleet to draw out of the cluster they were in when first

<sup>1</sup> Byron's Despatch, '*Princess Royal* at sea, July 8, 1779.'



DIAGRAM 6.—BATTLE OF GRENADA, JULY 6TH, 1779, DAYBREAK

sighted. Barrington accordingly wore round and led his ships along the enemy line. 1779

As the French ships cleared one another Byron realised for the first time that he was faced by superior numbers, but this did not deter him, and he still kept the signal flying for 'general chase.' The majority of the fleet followed after Barrington and formed up astern of him, but three ships, the *Grafton*, *Cornwall*, and *Lion*, who were to leeward of the remainder, received the fire of the whole French fleet, as it passed them, with disastrous results.

The battle then became a parallel one, and the British rigging and spars suffered severely from the high fire of their opponents, who, being in the leeward position, were able to bear up and keep away from close fighting. (Diagram No. 7.)

Rowley now appeared on the scene. He had been hurrying to the battle since leaving the convoy, and on seeing how the day was going, determined, in true Nelson style, to make for the enemy's van. The *Suffolk* and *Monmouth* suffered severely in this gallant attack, but it redounded greatly to Rowley's credit.

Byron was most anxious to keep his van well up with the enemy's leading ships, to 'prevent their doubling up on us and cutting off the transports which they seemed inclined to do and had the latter very much in their power by means of their large frigates,'<sup>1</sup> so when the French ships bore up at noon he refrained from following them, and the fleets separated. The *Cornwall*, *Grafton*, and *Lion* must have been a great anxiety to him at this time as they were dropping astern and to leeward on account of their damaged state.

At 3 P.M. d'Estaing tacked his fleet and headed for these cripples, and Byron at once conformed, but the *Monmouth* in the van was too badly damaged to obey the signal. Cornwallis of the *Lion*, seeing the leading French ships would soon be on top of him, put his helm up and ran down to Jamaica, where he arrived a fortnight later. The *Cornwall*, *Grafton*, and another cripple, the *Fame*, could do nothing but stand on and accept heavy punishment as the French fleet passed. (Diagram No. 8.)

<sup>1</sup> Byron's Despatch, 'Princess Royal at sea, July 8, 1779.'

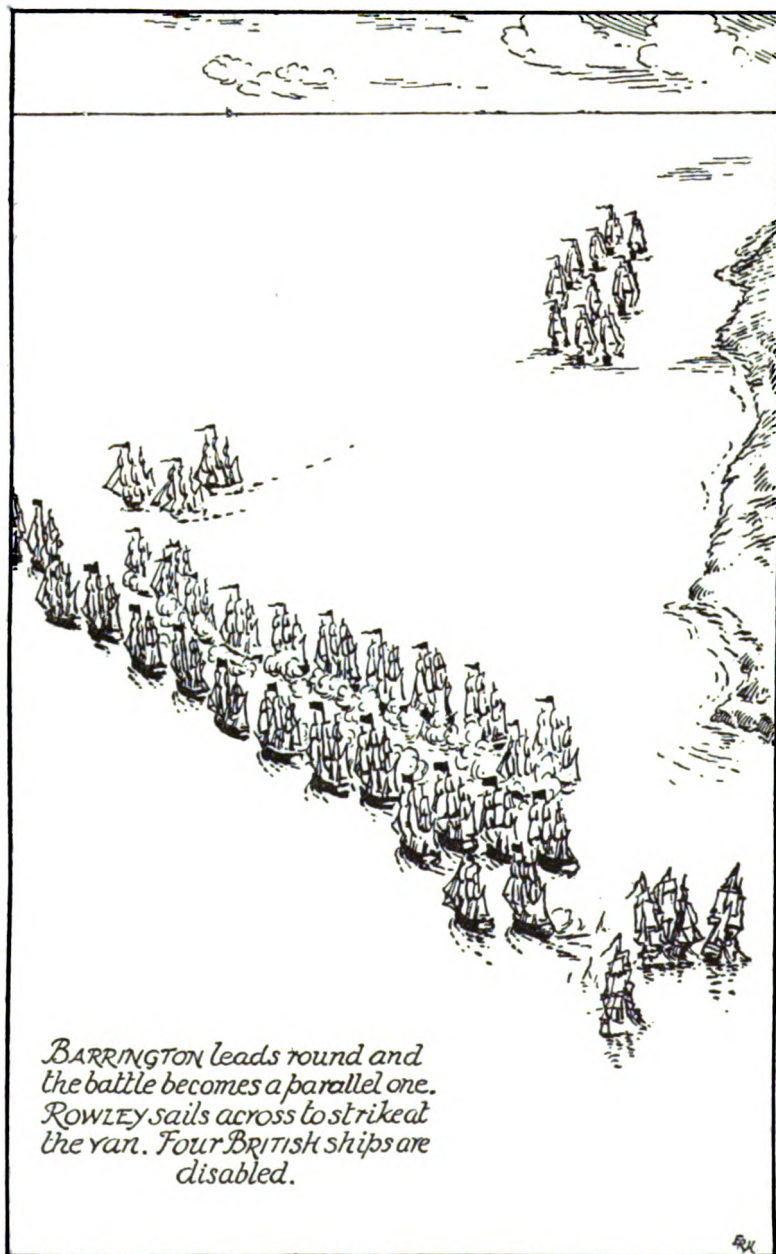


DIAGRAM 7.—BATTLE OF GRENADA, JULY 6TH, 1779, NOON

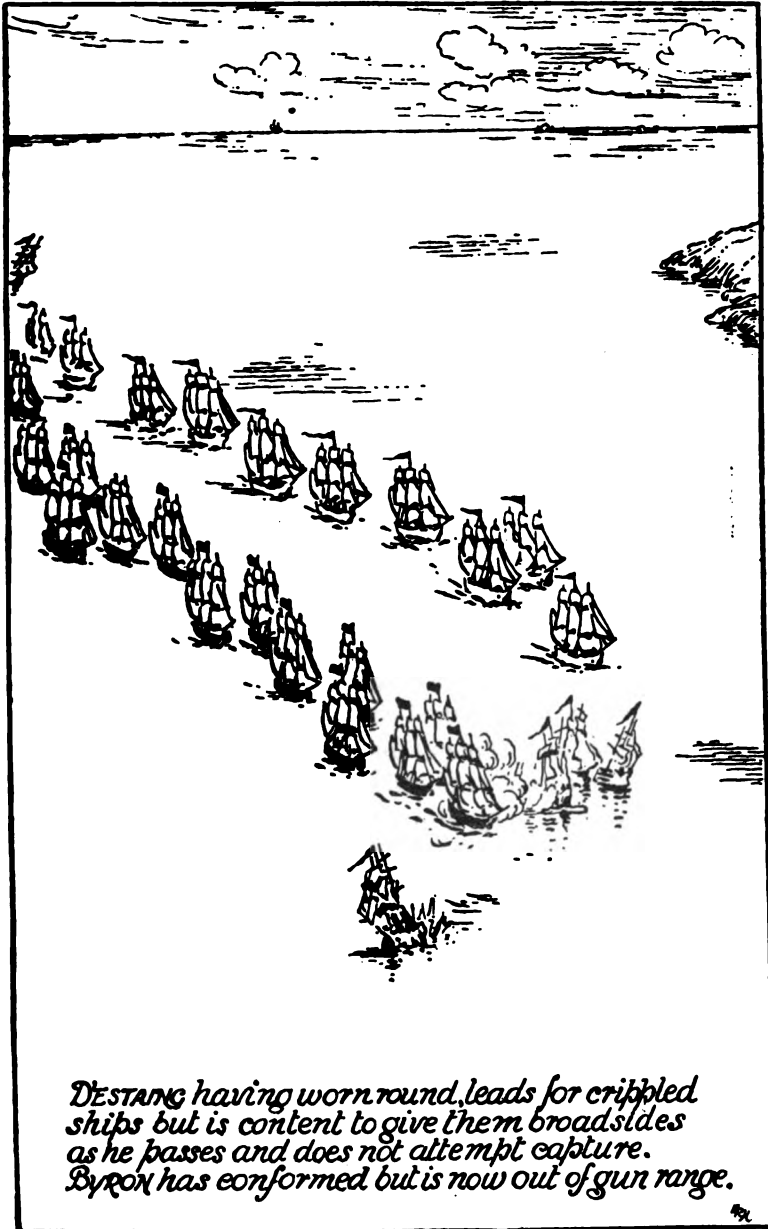


DIAGRAM 8.—BATTLE OF GREENADA, JULY 6TH, 1779, 3 P.M.

1779

D'Estaing was then satisfied and formed his line to leeward. In the evening Byron sent orders to the transports to make for Antigua or St. Kitts, as it was evident the French were in full possession of Grenada. The fleet lay-to for the night as 'although evident from their conduct throughout the whole day that they were resolved to avoid close engagement, yet I would not allow myself to think that with a force so greatly superior, the French Admiral would permit us to carry off the transports unmolested.'<sup>1</sup>

During the night d'Estaing returned to St. George's Harbour and Byron sailed next day for St. Kitts.

The losses in this action were : British, 188 killed, 346 wounded ; French, 166 killed, 763 wounded. The majority of the British losses occurred during Barrington's headstrong attack at the outset, Rowley's brilliant effort against the enemy's van, and in the three ships that dropped to leeward during the approach.

Whilst we must admire Byron's spirited attack, there is little doubt that he was badly advised in attacking with his ships so widely separated. He had the weather-gauge, and plenty of time to form his ships in supporting distance of one another before falling on the enemy, who were most unlikely to run before him and leave their newly acquired conquest.

As his ships were running down before the wind they could have struck the enemy's line where they chose, and it is difficult to understand why they held their set course after the enemy line had commenced to draw out, and struck the rear. When they turned up and sailed parallel to, and to windward of, the enemy they were thus not in a position to press the van, and it was thanks to Rowley's initiative that this pressure was brought.

Rowley's conduct on this occasion evoked the admiration of the officers and men of the French fleet. Though tied themselves to a rigid tactical doctrine they were not slow to appreciate skill and courage in others. Naval writers generally deal harshly with Byron, and maintain that his fleet should have been in proper formation before he ran down to attack. Greater sea generals than he did not wait to attain perfect order when time was all-important.

<sup>1</sup> Byron's Despatch, ' *Princess Royal* at sea, July 8, 1779.'

His obvious course was to attack before the French ships had all cleared the harbour. In the event his ships were too widely separated to achieve success, but if he had ordered Barrington to shorten sail until the van, centre and rear were within reasonable supporting distance of one another, he would still have had time to make a co-ordinated attack on an unformed and consequently unprepared fleet.

It is quite evident that Byron's misfortune was mainly due to lack of frigates. In his first despatch<sup>1</sup> after arriving on the station he stated that the number was insufficient. A line of frigates to windward of the islands and a regular patrol off the enemy ports would have enabled him to locate the enemy and know his strength. As it was, he depended for information on ships spoken during passage, and, not unnaturally, their stories differed considerably. He was badly served by the one frigate that attempted a reconnaissance of Fort Royal.

D'Estaing once more showed his disinclination to profit by a singularly advantageous position. When Rowley sailed down for his van attack, the transports became an easy prey for the French fast-sailing frigates. If d'Estaing had made the necessary signal, or sent off a boat with orders to his frigates, nothing could have saved the transports, as Byron's heavy ships could not have tacked up to windward in time to prevent their destruction. Later in the day he could very easily have made a prize of the *Monmouth*. She was badly damaged and practically immobile, and could not have resisted capture if any of the French van ships had been ordered to attack her. And finally, when he turned his fleet round and found the *Lion*, *Grafton*, *Cornwall*, and *Fame* lying crippled before him and only awaiting the *coup de grâce* which could be delivered by the whole fleet, he was content to fire a few broadsides as he passed, and allow them to stagger away to fight another day.

It was fortunate for Byron that Pierre de Suffren only commanded one ship and not the fleet in this action. Suffren was very distressed at the lost opportunities. 'Had our Admiral's seamanship equalled his courage' he wrote 'we would not have

<sup>1</sup> Byron's Despatch, 'Princess Royal, St. Lucia, January 7, 1779.'



- 1779 allowed four dismasted ships to escape.'<sup>1</sup> That he would have acted differently from d'Estaing is evident from his conduct of the action at Porto Praya and in the five battles with Hughes during the last two years of the war.
- July 15 Byron arrived at St. Kitts on the 15th, and was there joined by the transports. He anchored his fleet to form a defensive line, with the transports inshore, and proceeded with the refit of his damaged ships. It was no easy task. Stores were extremely scarce, and the fleet was immobilised for a long time.
- July 21 On the 21st d'Estaing appeared off the harbour with twenty-six of the line and tacked backwards and forwards, but Byron was in no state to proceed out, and d'Estaing, doubtless profiting by experience, showed no intention of attacking. After this parade, d'Estaing sailed west to Cap François and there prepared to co-operate with the American land forces at Savannah.
- Aug. 23 On the 23rd of August Byron handed over the command to Hyde-Parker and sailed for England. Parker put to sea as soon as his ships were ready, and was fortunate enough to fall in with a French convoy escorted by a frigate near Fort Royal on the
- Dec. 18 18th of December. He gave chase, and nine or ten valuable ships ran themselves ashore and were burnt, whilst nine were made prize. On hearing the guns, La Motte Picquet came out of Fort Royal with three ships of the line, and a short sharp action took place, which was abruptly terminated when Parker's ships found they were under fire of the harbour batteries.
- Dec. 20 Two days later Parker heard that three enemy ships had been sighted to the north of St. Lucia, and sent off Rowley with four ships of the line in pursuit. The three Frenchmen proved to be the *La Blanche*, thirty-six guns, *La Fortunie*, forty-two guns, and a twenty-eight gun ship, part of d'Estaing's fleet which he sent back from Savannah. All were overhauled and taken.

This brought to an end the second phase of the Battle for the islands. With the disappearance of d'Estaing, the British fleet was in a commanding position, but the French had added St. Vincent and Grenada to their possessions.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DISJOINTED OPERATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA—1779

PARLIAMENT met in November, 1778, and very warm debates took place on the King's Speech. The First Lord of the Admiralty was attacked by the Opposition, and though he admitted that the naval preparations had been much too slow, he stoutly denied the allegations that the fleet was in a bad state. The Government asked for seventy thousand men, including seventeen thousand Marines, to man the fleet, and the total naval vote came to £15,700,000. 1778

It had been known for some time that Spain had been preparing for war, and the King's Speech hinted at a possibility of a renewal of the Bourbon alliance. A month before Parliament met, Spain published a declaration expressing approbation of the treaty between France and America, and it was not to be very long before she threw away the mask.

On the 16th of June the Marquis d'Almodovar, Spanish Ambassador at London, handed to Lord Weymouth a document couched in none too friendly terms. The opening paragraph emphasised the 'noble impartiality' of the King of Spain, but in subsequent paragraphs complaint was made that the King's efforts at mediation had been rejected, and further that he had several specific grievances. His territory had been trespassed on, his ships had been searched and plundered, his dominions in America were threatened, the British had raised up the Indian natives to attack Louisiana, and acts of hostility had been committed in the Bay of Honduras. Because of these unfriendly acts, the King 'found himself under the disagreeable necessity 1779  
June 16

1779 of making use of all the means that the Almighty has given him to do himself justice which he had in vain solicited.'

Despite the bellicose tone of this document, British Ministers replied in pacific terms. The King was informed that his mediation was only rejected because France's conditions were inadmissible; that, as Spain had been harbouring American privateers, it had been difficult to avoid mistakes in captures at sea, but full reparation had been made when such mistakes were proved; that the setting of the Indians against Spanish-American possessions was denied; and the supposed acts of hostility in the Bay of Honduras were now heard of for the first time.

The truth was that Spain thought the moment opportune to join in the war, and as there was no real *casus belli*, had invented a number of imaginary grievances. There is little doubt that the state of the British Navy, the failure of the British military effort in America, and, perhaps, above all, Keppel's failure to achieve victory against d'Orvilliers, had settled the matter as far as Spain was concerned. In addition, there was the constant pressure from France, who, no doubt, painted in glowing colours all that would be gained if the hereditary enemy, already partially discomfited, was brought to her knees. Gibraltar, Minorca, perhaps some rich West Indian islands were prizes to make any Don's mouth water.

June 19 On the 19th of June war was declared against Spain, and it was not long before the effect of her entry was felt in home waters and in the West Indies. Her principal home bases were at Ferrol, Cadiz, and Cartagena. She had a large number of ships of the line ready for service, but the naval personnel was not of a high order. No naval renaissance had taken place since the last war, and it was not long before both France and Great Britain realised that the value of the long list of ships and guns was heavily discounted by the calibre of the men who directed their movements,

The influence of this new enemy was not felt in North America until later in the year.

The North American campaign of 1779 was one of 'little packets.' It will be remembered that the last movement of



MAP XII

1778 1778 was the departure of a military expedition under Lieut.-Colonel Campbell, escorted by Hyde-Parker, to operate against the southern colonies.

Dec. 27 Campbell's first objective was Savannah, and, after a stormy voyage, his transports arrived in the Savannah River on the 27th of December. Having obtained information as to the enemy's dispositions, he and Hyde-Parker decided to move up the river to a position two miles below Savannah. Two enemy 'galleys' attacked them on passage, but were driven off by Parker's odd collection of galleys, brigs and sloops. On the Dec. 29 29th the troops landed in flatboats, and soon came up with the enemy forces, under Major-General Robert Howe, about half a mile east of the town. The enemy were strongly posted, but Campbell fortunately learnt from a negro of a path through a wooded swamp, which led towards the right of the enemy position. Making the most skilful use of the ground to hide the movements of his troops and his guns, he delivered a double attack and routed the enemy. By nightfall he was in possession of Savannah and a great quantity of war stores. Campbell was evidently not only a skilful general but an extremely active and enterprising leader, for he was off again as soon as possible after the enemy, who retreated up the river.

Supported by a flotilla of armed boats and galleys under Captain Stanhope, he eventually reached a point fifty miles above Savannah. On their way up the river the flotilla captured an armed brig, two sloops, and a schooner.

Except for a garrison at Sunbury, Georgia was now cleared of the enemy, and Hyde-Parker and Campbell issued a proclamation to the inhabitants offering protection to those who would take the oath of allegiance.

1779 On the 10th of January Campbell arrived back at Savannah, Jan. 10 and there learnt that Sunbury, too, was in British hands, the garrison having surrendered to the forces under Major-General Prevost, who had marched up from Georgia to join him.

*Georgia, Fla.*  
Prevost then took command of the combined force, and was soon in the field once more, for Congress, fearful for the fate of Charleston, had ordered Major-General Lincoln, one of their best

officers, to march south with a considerable force. Lincoln after 1779  
compelling Prevost to withdraw his advanced forces, established  
himself about twenty miles above Savannah.

On the 3rd of March Prevost advanced, and directed his Mar. 3  
brother, Lieutenant-Colonel Prevost, to undertake the main  
attack with about 900 men, whilst Sir James Baird, with three  
companies, made a circuit in order to get behind the enemy's  
position. The enemy were routed, and left a quantity of booty  
on the battlefield. Communication with the interior was once  
again opened, and a great number of people from the countryside  
came in to take the oath of allegiance.

But the enemy was soon back with a reinforced army, and the  
old story of British operations being rendered futile by lack of men,  
money and provisions was once more to be repeated. Lincoln  
first threatened Augusta, and compelled Prevost to evacuate  
the town and retire down river, and by the 23rd of April General April 23  
Moultrie was established at Purysburg with a thousand troops.  
Prevost then decided to cross the river and invade South Carolina  
with 3,000 men. He attempted a surprise attack on Moultrie,  
but the latter made good his escape and hastened to Charleston,  
at the same time sending an urgent message to Lincoln for assist-  
ance. Moultrie did all in his power to impede the British advance  
by breaking down bridges, but Prevost hurried on, and on the  
12th of May summoned Charleston to surrender.

The garrison numbered about 3,000 raw troops, and Moultrie May 12  
and the Governor, Rutledge, had prepared the defence, but the  
merchants prevailed upon the Governor to propose to Prevost  
'That South Carolina should remain in a state of neutrality till  
the close of the war, and then follow the fate of its neighbours,  
on condition that the Royal army should withdraw.'

As the contemporary historian remarks, the proposal was  
'extremely jesuitical.'<sup>1</sup> Moultrie and Rutledge must have known  
that Prevost's army was not strong enough to take the town, and  
that Lincoln was hurrying to their assistance.

Prevost rejected the proposal, and, realising his force was too  
weak to assault, retired to James Island, St. John's Island, and

<sup>1</sup> Beatson's Naval and Military Memoirs.

1779 the other islands on the south side of the harbour, where he would be assured of provisions and means of retirement by sea.

June Lincoln appeared on the scene early in June and attacked the British force, under Lieut.-Colonel Maitland, on St. John's Island. The attack, though made in greatly superior force, was repulsed.

Prevost, thoroughly disappointed with the result of his incursion into Carolina, then abandoned St. John's, and began to move his troops back to Savannah, leaving a garrison on Port Royal Island.

Sept. After this retirement great heat caused a lull in the operations, and it was not until September that they were renewed, but this time with very different forces, for d'Estaing and his fleet appeared once more to co-operate with the Americans against a British army.

Sept. 1 D'Estaing had been asked by Governor Rutledge to come to his assistance when the hurricane season brought operations in the West Indies to a close, and he accordingly sailed from Cap François with twenty ships of the line, seven frigates, a number of small craft, and about 5,000 troops in transports, and arrived off the coast of Georgia on the 1st of September. Amongst his senior officers were Bougainville, de Suffren, de Grasse, La Motte Picquet, and Des Touches. La Motte Picquet had brought him out orders to return to France and leave the divisions of de Grasse and Picquet in the West Indies, but he decided to disregard them.

The arrival of the fleet was a complete surprise, and the *Experiment*, fifty guns, with a considerable sum of money for the payment of the troops in Georgia, the *Ariel* frigate and two storeships were captured off the coast. One of the storeships was a great boon to d'Estaing, as she carried anchors, cables and running rigging.

Sept. 3 The fleet was sighted from Tybee on the 3rd of September, and, on the *Rose* frigate reporting that the newcomers were French, a brig was despatched to New York to inform Clinton and Arbuthnot.

D'Estaing first tried to make himself master of the line of communications between Port Royal Island and Savannah, and

thus cut off Maitland's garrison on the island from the main force, 1779  
but Maitland, assisted by a Lieutenant Goldesburgh, got through  
by using the creeks and inlets along the coast.

On the 9th of September the French armada anchored off Sept. 9  
the bar, and on the 10th the troops began to disembark at a point  
thirteen miles below Savannah in boats obtained from Charleston.

The weak force of frigates, brigs and galleys under Captain  
Henry could only assist the garrison by landing guns and men to  
strengthen the fortifications.

Prevost had, in the meantime, prepared his defence with  
great energy, and when, on the 16th, he received a general sum- Sept. 16  
mons to surrender from d'Estaing, he replied that he would not  
surrender to a general summons, but would consider specific  
terms. Further interchange of notes took place, during which  
d'Estaing's troops formed a junction with Lincoln's army, and  
Maitland joined Prevost from Port Royal Island. The final note  
from Prevost was to the effect that he intended to defend Savannah  
to the last extremity, and hostilities at once commenced.

British soldiers and sailors vied with each other in strengthening  
the defences, mounting guns, and making earthworks; fire-rafts  
were prepared in case the French fleet attempted to co-operate  
with their army; and a number of transports were sunk to block  
the river passage.

On the 3rd of October the enemy's batteries opened, and for Oct. 3  
three days shot and carcasses were poured into the town from a  
great number of cannon and mortars. On the 6th Prevost sent Oct. 6  
a letter to d'Estaing asking that the women and children might  
be evacuated, but this was refused. At last, a little before day-  
break on the 9th, the Franco-American army advanced to the Oct. 9  
assault.

The principal attack against Prevost's right was led by  
d'Estaing, and, despite a galling fire from the British batteries,  
French colours were planted on the redoubt. But not for long.  
Other batteries soon turned their guns on the intruders, and a  
small force of Grenadiers and Marines charged with such vigour  
that the enemy retreated precipitately. D'Estaing was badly  
wounded in this assault. An attack on the left never materialised,

M



1779 as the column came under such a heavy fire whilst in the hollow ground, that they could not advance. It was now daylight, but fog and smoke prevented Prevost getting a clear view of the situation, and he did not feel justified in pursuing the retreating French troops. The disparity in losses was remarkable. The French killed and wounded numbered about 1,000, whilst the British total was fifty-five.

It was d'Estaing who had urged Lincoln to abandon slow siege operations and attempt to storm the town. Throughout the operations he was anxious about his fleet, as his ships were neither in a good state of repair nor in a good anchorage for the season of the year. He also realised that his fleet was in no state to fight if a British fleet appeared on the coast, as he had a large number of men, guns, and stores employed on shore.

Oct. 26 The failure of the assault only added to the lack of cordiality that had existed from the beginning between the Allies, and d'Estaing for the second time sailed away after mutual recriminations instead of rejoicing. He re-embarked his troops, and was clear of the harbour by the 26th of October. Lincoln, left unsupported, crossed the river, and entered South Carolina.

De Grasse wrote of the Savannah enterprise: 'Good God! It would have to be seen to be believed, and if we only told half we would be taken for exaggerators and biassed men. The Navy will feel the effects for a long time.'<sup>1</sup>

When a short way out, d'Estaing ordered de Grasse to part company and take the West Indian Islands garrisons back to their stations under escort of a small squadron, and at the same time detached La Motte Picquet to escort a damaged ship to Martinique. He also ordered some ships of the line to proceed to the Chesapeake under de Vaudreuil, but they were shortly afterwards overtaken by a heavy gale, and only the flagship reached her destination. With the remainder he shaped course  
Dec. 7 for France, where he arrived on the 7th of December.

The Comte de Guichen, who was selected to relieve d'Estaing in the West Indies, was sixty-eight years old, and, unlike his predecessor, had been at sea since the age of eighteen. He had

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

served under de la Motte, de L'Isle, de Blenac and d'Estaing 1779 during the Seven Years War, and had for many years been a squadron or fleet commander.

Prevost had done well, but the troops he commanded, and those in the West Indies under Grant, represented a serious reduction of the main army under Clinton at New York. As will be seen later, reinforcements were delayed by the action of the French in home waters, and did not arrive until the 25th Aug. 25 of August. Despite the inadequacy of the force, Germain was constantly writing letters urging Clinton to undertake operations here, there and everywhere. No wonder Clinton's patience gave way. No wonder he wrote to Germain: 'For God's sake, my Lord, if you wish me to do anything, leave me to myself, and let me adapt my efforts to the hourly change of circumstances.'<sup>1</sup>

Gambier returned to England early in the spring, and the naval command devolved on Captain Sir George Collier, whose force consisted of one sixty-four-gun ship, three small ships of the line, and about thirty frigates.

In the New York area the enemy were the first to take the offensive with an attack on a British post on Long Island. A brig and two sloops sailed close in shore and bombarded Sag Harbour, but were driven off by shore guns with the loss of the brig.

But with the coming of spring Clinton and Collier determined to act, and concerted measures for the destruction of enemy depôts and magazines in Virginia. With this object a force of 2,500 men under Major-General Matthew embarked in twenty-two transports early in May. The force sailed on the 5th, escorted May 5 by two ships of the line and some small craft, and anchored in Hampton Roads on the 10th. Matthew landed his troops about May 10 three miles below Portsmouth under covering fire from gunboats and advanced against Fort Nelson which the enemy at once evacuated, after burning several ships. He then took possession of Portsmouth, and on the 12th a column under Colonel Garth May 12 seized Suffolk where a large quantity of military stores was destroyed.

Norfolk, opposite Portsmouth, met the same fate.

<sup>1</sup> Clinton to Germain, May 22, 1779.

1779 Collier then despatched a force of galleys, gunboats, and flatboats up-river to operate against enemy vessels, and also a small force up the Chesapeake. Both these forces met with success and destroyed a number of vessels including a fine privateer, the *Black Snake*.

May 25 Several incursions were made into the surrounding country to destroy stores, and then Matthew re-embarked his troops and arrived back at New York in the 25th of May. About 130 vessels of varying sizes were taken or destroyed during these operations.

May 30 Clinton and Collier next decided to attack Stony Point and Verplanks on the Hudson River. On the 30th the expedition sailed, Collier going up in his flagship, *Raisonnable*, and subsequently transferring to the *Camilla* frigate. In the evening the fleet came to anchor just below Fort Lafayette on Verplanks Point, and the troops were landed on both sides of the river. After capturing the heights round Stony Point, Clinton brought up batteries to play on Fort Lafayette, whilst a sloop and a galley went up-river to prevent the enemy's retreat by water. The garrison soon found their position untenable, and surrendered.

Clinton's next move was an attempt to draw Washington from his strong position by sending an expedition up Long Island Sound to threaten the Connecticut coast. An additional incentive was provided by the numerous small privateers that were known to be fitting out on that coast.

July 3 On the 3rd of July about 2,500 men under General Tryon and Colonel Garth, escorted by frigates under Collier, sailed for New-

July 5 haven, and anchored off the town on the 5th. Garth, with one division, marched on Westhaven, whilst Tryon made for Newhaven. A quantity of stores and shipping were destroyed in both places.

July 8 The force then re-embarked and anchored off Fairfield on the 8th, where a number of boats and a quantity of stores were destroyed.

July 9 On the 9th the expedition arrived off Norwalk, where a number of vessels were fired. This brought the operations to a close, and

July 15 the transports anchored at New York on the 15th.

Later in the month Clinton received information of the sailing

of an enemy force from Boston to operate against the British post at Penobscot, 180 miles up the coast. This post had been established to protect a settlement of loyalist refugees from New York, and the garrison consisted of 600 men under Brigadier-General Maclean. But they were not properly established or in a good condition of defence when the news of the Boston expedition was received. Immediate action was necessary, and Collier sailed north on the 3rd of August with one ship of the line and a number of frigates. 1779 Aug. 3

Meanwhile, Maclean, realising he could not complete his permanent works in time, set to with great energy to prepare temporary defences, and ranged his few small vessels across the harbour entrance.

On the 25th of July the enemy appeared and attempted to land. They were repeatedly driven off, but on the 28th they obtained a footing on shore by force of numbers, and opened their batteries on the British positions. A young ensign, John Moore, earned great credit during this fighting. Siege operations continued until the 12th of August, and on that day a deserter informed Maclean that the assault was to take place next morning. The British force waited anxiously for the final trial of strength, but, to their surprise, at daylight found that the enemy had disappeared. July 25 Aug. 12

It was Collier who was responsible for bringing about this complete change in the situation. He had arrived in time, and on entering the river had ordered his ships to 'chase' the enemy frigates. Two attempted to get to sea, but one ran ashore and was lost, and the other was fired by her crew. A third surrendered, and the rest of the fleet, including twenty-four transports, were destroyed either by their own crews or Collier's smaller craft. The power a fleet possesses by virtue of its mobility was never more clearly shown than in this minor operation.

Collier then returned to New York, where he handed over the command to Vice-Admiral Arbuthnot, who had recently arrived from England.

Arbuthnot had brought out reinforcements, but owing to deaths on the voyage and sickness they only totalled 8,400 men

1779 and, worse still, the fever they brought with them spread to the main army, and soon 6,000 men were on the sick list.

In the meantime, d'Estaing had arrived on the coast, and, as Arbuthnot's force was not strong enough to challenge the French command of the sea communications, the British movements were now considerably restricted.

Clinton was in a difficult position. Haldimand, the General in Canada, was crying for reinforcements, and the Governor of Jamaica had also written urging that the inadequate island garrison should be reinforced in view of the presence of d'Estaing. There were far too many calls on the army at New York, and Clinton, though he managed to send reinforcements to Haldimand cancelled the orders he had given for a force under Cornwallis to proceed to Jamaica. He also decided to evacuate Rhode Island. To add to his difficulties, Arbuthnot brought news that Spain was on the point of entering the arena, and the usual suggestions from Germain, including one for an attack on New Orleans.

The only ray of sunshine in this gloomy state of affairs was that Washington was also finding great difficulty in keeping his army up to strength. Despite the efforts of Congress, individual States were still principally concerned with their own safety, and were giving more attention to raising local militia than to finding men for the National Army. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that Washington looked on d'Estaing's operations in the south as so much waste of effort.

Clinton was powerless so long as the French fleet was in North American waters, but as soon as reports arrived of d'Estaing's departure from Savannah, he began to prepare for an offensive campaign in the Carolinas.

The operations of the year have been entitled the 'British Disjointed Offensive,' but in reality the army was on the defensive for a great part of the campaigning season.

Prevost had achieved a success, Haldimand still held Canada, the main army at New York was safe from attack, but Rhode Island, an invaluable fleet base, had been evacuated.

Rodney deplored the decision to give up this base. In a

letter to Germain he wrote:—‘I now come, my lord, to the evacuating of Rhode Island, the most fatal measure that could possibly have been taken. It gave up the best, and the only harbour of consequence in America during this unhappy war; a harbour capable of holding the whole fleet of Britain, and from whence she might have detached her squadrons that in forty-eight hours might have blockaded the three chief cities of America, viz.: Boston, New York, and Philadelphia; a harbour at all seasons of the year, which none of the others are. This pernicious advice flowed from an Admiral as Sir H. C. assured me.’<sup>1</sup> It was Arbuthnot who gave this advice, though later on he qualified it when there were fears of d’Estaing taking Halifax.

The entry of Spain during the year caused a further dissipation of effort. Brigadier-General Campbell, who was at Pensacola in command of a mixed force of worn-out veterans, Germans, and Irish deserters, might have achieved something if he had been told to commence hostilities, but this was forgotten, and early in September the Spaniards seized the British posts on the Mississippi. At the same time they took the offensive against the British settlement at St. George’s Key in Honduras and captured it.

Sir Peter Parker was in command of the Jamaica Station, and his fleet consisted of five small ships of the line and fourteen frigates.<sup>2</sup> Amongst the latter were the *Hinchinbrook*, twenty-four guns, Captain Horatio Nelson, and the *Badger*, twelve guns, Cuthbert Collingwood.

As soon as orders were received to commence hostilities against Spain, he sent a 44-gun ship commanded by John Luttrell to look into the Spanish port Omoa as the annual convoy was expected there. Captain Nugent, of the *Pomona*, was sent on ahead to pick up pilots. He transferred to a schooner and entered St. George’s Key, but on attempting to land he was fired on and his boat siezed. Armed boats then attacked the schooner, but they were driven off. On the arrival of the *Pomona*

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Germain, *Sandwich*, St. Lucia, December 12, 1780 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix IX.

1779 the Spaniards fled, and Nugent, who was fortunately not carried off, then set sail and joined Luttrell.

Luttrell at once sent a schooner to reconnoitre Omoa. She reported that there were three ships at anchor under the fort, but that the fortifications did not appear to be strong. This intelligence proved to be incorrect, for when he arrived with his force off the harbour he found the fortifications were too formidable to attack from seaward.

He therefore decided to wait for the Spanish ships off Cape Antonio, but on the 7th of October he met a sloop escorting a small convoy with a detachment of the Loyal Irish Corps and some Mosquito Indians under Major Dalrymple. Dalrymple and Luttrell at once decided to return to Omoa and attack. Frigates were sent to collect English settlers from the coast to swell the numbers, and on the 10th of October the squadron anchored in a bay close to Omoa and the troops were landed. After a very severe march the little force arrived opposite the town to the great astonishment of the Spanish defenders.

Luttrell's squadron entered the harbour and bombarded the defences, but the Spanish positions were strong, and it was soon evident that the British artillery was not of large enough calibre to undertake siege operations.

The British commanders then decided to assault, and about 1,500 seamen, marines and infantry were organised for the purpose.

Whilst the squadron bombarded, these courageous men advanced silently towards the walls. The parole was 'bayonet,' the counter-sign 'Britons strike home.' The alarm was given, but nothing could stem the headstrong assault, and, by means of scaling ladders, the gallant little force was soon in possession of the Spanish outer positions. The garrison then fled from their posts, and the Governor delivered up his sword and the keys of the fort to Dalrymple. The treasure taken in the ships was estimated to be worth three million pesetas. Many acts of gallantry were performed, and the conduct of one sailor is worth special mention. He had scaled the walls with a cutlass in each hand, and suddenly encountered an unarmed Spanish officer. Instead of falling on his enemy, he handed the Spaniard one of

his cutlasses, saying 'I scorn to take my advantage; you are now upon a footing with me.' Altogether a remarkably gallant little affair. 1779

Luttrell, after making arrangements for settling the British Baymen on Rattan Island, returned to Jamaica, leaving only the *Porcupine* sloop at Omoa.

The climate soon created havoc in the British garrison, and, on the Spaniards appearing outside the walls on the 25th of Nov. 25 November, the Commandant decided to abandon the hard-won conquest.

Great lack of foresight was shown by the British commanders in the area. Either the fort should have been destroyed and evacuated immediately after its capture, or the garrison and fleet should have been maintained at sufficient strength to hold the town against any possible attack.



## CHAPTER XII

### EUROPEAN WATERS, 1779

1779 AFTER the return of Keppel and d'Orvilliers to their home ports in the autumn of 1778, there was a long period of inaction in home waters, and it was not until the spring of the new year that the big fleets were set in motion.

The reinforcement and revictualling of the army in America was, as usual, the prior call on the forces at home, and Rear-Admiral Arbuthnot, who had been appointed to succeed Collier as Commander-in-Chief, North America, sailed on the 1st of May for New York with a convoy of nearly four hundred sail of merchant ships, transports, and victuallers escorted by five of the line and a frigate.

He had only just cleared from St. Helen's when he received intelligence that the enemy were attacking the Channel Islands. He at once ordered the convoy into Torbay and went to investigate. At Guernsey he learnt that the French were in the vicinity, but that some ships sent over by Sir Thomas Pye, Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, were there to deal with them. His presence being unnecessary, he left Sir James Wallace in the *Experiment* to reinforce the Portsmouth ships, and eventually some sharp fighting took place off St. Malo and in Cancale Bay to the complete discomfiture of the enemy. Arbuthnot meanwhile joined his convoy at Torbay, but contrary winds kept him there for some days, and, before he was able to sail, the Admiralty received intelligence of great activity at Brest and Rochefort. It was evident that the great convoy would be in considerable danger if the Brest fleet sailed, and Vice-Admiral Darby was ordered to reinforce Arbuthnot with twelve of the line until he was out of

the danger zone. Darby did not sail from Spithead until the 22nd of May, twenty-one days after the date the convoy was scheduled to leave. Thus threat of enemy interference resulted in Clinton's reinforcements arriving a long time after they had been promised. 1779 May 22 ✓

Sartine evidently had good intelligence of the British movements, though not of their object, for he urged d'Orvilliers to get to sea with the object of intercepting Darby or effecting a junction with the Spanish fleet before a British fleet established a blockade of Brest.

On the 4th of June d'Orvilliers sailed with twenty-eight of the line, a heavy deficiency in seamen being made up by two thousand soldiers, and Paris was agog with excitement at the prospect of a second meeting between the main fleets. But they did not meet, and d'Orvilliers went south to join the Spanish fleet at a rendezvous near Cape Villano. June 4

Before following the movements of the main fleets, it will be of interest to glance at the various operational plans which, though never carried out in full, provide an indication of French strategical ideas of the day.

Fleurieu's plan is of special interest.

He put down the forces available as :

England	..	..	..	80 ships of the line.
France ..	..	..	..	62 „ „ „ „
Spain ..	..	..	..	40 „ „ „ „

and proposed the following distribution :

	<i>Force</i>	<i>Object</i>
Spain.	15 of the line (and frigates in proportion) at Cuba.	Capture Jamaica.
Spain.	7 of the line.	Guard interior of Mediterranean.
Spain.	18 of the line.	Blockade Gibraltar.
French.	12 of the line and 6,000 soldiers.	Capture Cape of Good Hope.

1779	French. 12 of the line and 10 frigates in West Indies.	Capture Grenada, Barbados, etc.
	French. 6 of the line and 5 frigates.	North America. Co-operation with Americans.
	French. 32 of the line and 12 frigates at Brest.	Contain British forces.

He assumed that as the Brest fleet and Gibraltar blockading squadrons could concentrate at will and form a fleet of fifty ships of the line, the British Admiralty would be compelled to retain the majority of their ships in home waters.

A pretty plan, but one suffering from the fatal defect of striking everywhere at once. No one operation was accorded the post of honour. Furthermore, the plan assumed an efficiency in the Spanish Navy which the French Admiralty must have known did not exist. One redeeming feature was that each navy was given its own special objects, and perhaps Fleurieu appreciated the almost insuperable difficulties that arise from the organisation and administration of ships of two nations in one fleet without many months or even years of co-operation in peace-time.

Of the other plans submitted to the Ministry, the most interesting are those of the Comte de Wall, Dumouriez, and the Comte de Broglie.

Wall was an Irishman who had accompanied the Pretender in 1745 and had been for many years in the French service. He was Camp Marshal of the Army for the invasion of England which was encamped in Normandy in 1779. His plan was to make a descent on Ireland, where he was confident a general rising would take place if the people were supported. He asked for 14,000 men and hoped to reach his objective by evasion, choosing a moment when westerly winds had driven the British fleet into port. The port of disembarkation was to be Waterford. Later he modified his plan by substituting men-of-war for transports in order to hasten the sea passage. This plan had the one great defect of attempting a large military operation overseas before accounting for the enemy's main naval forces.

Dumouriez, who was Commandant at Cherbourg, proposed 1779 to embark 12,000 men in men-of-war at that port and seize the Isle of Wight with the object of controlling the approaches to Portsmouth. He gave little consideration to the large British forces, sea and land, in the area.

Brogie's plan was much sounder. He had given a great deal of time and thought to the problem, and submitted his proposals shortly after the news of Saratoga was received. A landing was to take place in the Bristol Channel, at Barnstaple or Bristol, and the operation was to be covered by the main fleet. At the same time the Spaniards were to operate independently against Milford Haven. In contradistinction to other plans, he took into account the British main fleet, and the difficulties of working efficiently with the Spanish fleet.

These and many other similar plans were considered by the Ministry, but in the end it was decided to operate with a combined fleet, and Vergennes wrote to Madrid to that effect in December, 1778. A great deal of correspondence took place between Versailles and Le Prado as to the objective and the number of ships each nation was to supply. In the end the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth were selected as the points of attack.

The sailing of d'Orvilliers was the signal to the Marquis d'Almodovar, the Spanish Ambassador, to deliver his manifesto. That manifesto came as no surprise, nor can the subsequent concentration of the Bourbon fleets have been unexpected, but those directing British strategy were unequal to the occasion. If there had been a strong British administration, a well-prepared fleet, and an Anson at the helm, a British fleet would have been off Brest to impede the movements of the French fleet, whether d'Orvilliers intended to act alone or in co-operation with other forces.

It was not until June that the Grand Fleet put to sea.<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Hardy, the new Commander-in-Chief, had had a distinguished career in the Seven Years War, serving under Boscawen and Hawke, but had been Governor of Greenwich Hospital since 1771, and was now sixty-three and old for his years. Political

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix X.

1779 exigencies had caused his appointment, a number of flag officers having refused to serve whilst Sandwich was First Lord. The unfortunate state of affairs can be seen from a letter written by Captain Leveson-Gower to Captain Cornwallis :—

‘ I thought it was impossible that they could have trusted our fleet to Sir Charles Hardy, and could not doubt Lord Howe would be called on, knowing their hatred of Admiral Keppel was such as not to be got the better of. To Lord Howe therefore I went, and begged he would give me leave to serve with him as a volunteer or any other manner he should think proper to employ me . . . but he has not been called upon not even in the moment when they were really frightened, nor was he the least taken notice of when he went to show himself at Court.’ <sup>1</sup>

Kempenfelt, the First Captain of the Flagship, and certainly one of the ablest men of the day, was in despair. In his letters to Middleton there are many references to the incapacity of the Admiral. ‘ Does the people at home think the nation in no danger? Where is Lord Howe at this alarming period? I can’t say more : you’ll divine the rest.’ <sup>2</sup>

‘ In confidence I must inform you the confused conduct here is such that I tremble for the event. There is no forethought. . . we are every day from morning to night plagued and puzzled in minutiae, whilst essentials are totally neglected. . . . There is a fund of good nature in the man, but not one grain of the Commander-in-Chief. . . . My God, what have your great people done by such an appointment.’ <sup>3</sup>

‘ It is with the greatest difficulty that I can ever prevail upon him to manœuvre the fleet : he is always so impatient and in such a hurry to get to the eastward, to the northward, or to the southward, that he won’t lose time to form a line.

‘ An Admiral who commands in chief should have the esteem, the respect, and the confidence of his officers, but our Admiral fails in all these . . . though good natured, his manners are

<sup>1</sup> Leveson-Gower to Cornwallis, October 28, 1779 (H.M.C. Cornwallis Wykeham-Martin MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, ‘ *Victory* off the Lizard, July 2, 1779 ’ (N.R.S. vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>3</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, ‘ *Victory*, August 6, 1779 ’ (N.R.S. vol. xxxiii.).

rude . . . when an officer comes he almost shoves him out of the ship.' <sup>1</sup> 1779

What a tragedy is revealed by these letters ! Hardy dragged out of retirement and physically unfit, called on at a critical time to undertake a command beyond his powers, and Kempenfelt, who was universally looked on as the finest officer of his day, trying to compete with a senior whose bad points became more and more emphasised as the strain told.

Nor was the Admiral always willing to take advantage of Kempenfelt's services. 'An odd obstinacy and way of negating everything proposed makes all advice useless.' <sup>2</sup>

Men who know that they are inadequate for a task frequently take up a defensive position behind a rampart of silence and negatives, and according to Count Rumford, a volunteer on board the flagship, Hardy 'evidently meant to take as small a share of responsibility upon himself as possible, to procrastinate as long as he could, and when he was obliged to act to make Ministers responsible for the consequences if he failed.' Count Rumford perhaps exaggerated, but there is ample evidence that Hardy should never have accepted the command. His junior Flag Officers were Vice-Admiral George Darby and Rear-Admirals Sir John Ross and Robert Digby. The best known of his Captains were Adam Duncan (afterwards Lord Camperdown), John Jervis (afterwards Lord St. Vincent), Sir Challoner Ogle, Hon. R. B. Walsingham, Sir Richard Bickerton and Sir Charles Douglas.

In May Hardy received secret orders <sup>3</sup> from the Admiralty.

As the 'great armaments which have been made in the ports of Spain' might join those of France, he was to endeavour to intercept any Spanish ships 'of the line of battle that may attempt to enter or that are evidently bound for a port of France,' also any Spanish ships found acting in conjunction with those of France. 'But in all other cases' he was to 'consider the ships of Spain as those of a Power at Peace and in friendship with Great

<sup>1</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, 'Victory off Scilly, August 9, 1779' (N.R.S. vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, 'Victory, August 6th, 1779' (N.R.S. vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>3</sup> 'Most secret and confidential, May, 1779,' Admiralty Out-Letters.

1779 Britain and to afford them any assistance or protection they may stand in need of.'

Ministers were evidently once more in doubt how to act towards an enemy as yet undeclared. A few days later another secret order arrived directing him to proceed to sea as soon as Darby returned, 'as the French are fitting out a considerable fleet at Brest which is to be joined by ships of war from Port L'Orient, Rochefort, and probably Toulon.'

He was directed to cruise off Ushant 'taking all possible care not to be driven to the westward' and use his 'utmost endeavour to distress the enemy.'

If the fleet in Brest Roads was found to be inferior he was to make detachments to prevent ships joining the Brest fleet from the southward.

If the French fleet had sailed before he reached his station, he was to proceed in pursuit, if there was any probability of being able to come up with it, 'without leaving Great Britain and Ireland exposed, the protection of which must always be the principal object of your care.'

If there was no chance of coming up with the French fleet, he was to proceed to a rendezvous off the Lizard and there await orders.

Darby returned to St. Helen's on the 22nd of May and on the  
June 16 16th of June the Grand Fleet of thirty-five sail of the line cleared from Spithead.

Soon after sailing a frigate joined with the news that war with Spain had been declared, and also brought new orders from the Admiralty. These directed Hardy to return to a Channel port if he received intelligence that the French and Spanish fleets had joined and were in much superior force.

June 22 On the 22nd of June, when off Ushant, Hardy received news of the sailing of the French fleet, and accordingly moved north to the Lizard.

July 2 On the 2nd of July a Genoese ship was spoken. She reported that she had sighted a French fleet of forty-seven sail off Cape Finisterre on the 10th of June. Next day a westerly gale drove

July 5 the fleet up channel, and it came to anchor in Torbay on the 5th.

On the 8th Hardy received orders to put to sea again. He was off Ushant on the 21st, and there he collected intelligence from various ships which convinced him that d'Orvilliers had been joined by a Spanish fleet. He then made north for the Lizard, but was again driven into Plymouth by westerly gales.

1779  
July 8  
July 21

All this time the alarm in England had been spreading. On the 9th of July a Royal Proclamation was issued which commanded the people of the Southern counties to drive all horses and cattle from the coasts in case of invasion. Booms were placed across the entrance to Plymouth Harbour; orders were sent to prepare vessels for sinking across harbour entrances; and a large number of troops were encamped on the South coast. Steps were also taken to strengthen naval defences, and small squadrons and flotillas were organised and stationed at different parts of the South coast to act against transports.

To add to the anxiety of the Government, a convoy of 200 sail was shortly expected from Jamaica, and a number of ships with rich cargoes were due from the East Indies.

It was a dramatic moment. It was known that a force of 50,000 men was collected at Havre and St. Malo, and that 400 vessels were prepared for their transport. But the exact intentions of the enemy were unknown. Only one thing was certain. The combined allied fleet was very much superior to any force that could be collected to bar their way if they came up Channel.

We must now return to d'Orvilliers. On the 2nd of July the Ferrol division of the Spanish Fleet joined him, but it was not until the 23rd that Don Luis de Cordova joined with the main body from Cadiz. The armada then consisted of sixty-six sail of the line. The long wait must have been exasperating to d'Orvilliers, whose fleet had been hurried away badly manned and short of provisions and water. For six weeks he cruised round the rendezvous doing nothing, and all the time sickness was spreading amongst his crews. He was also dissatisfied with the handling of the ships. 'The number of mediocre Captains,' he wrote, 'is still greater this cruise than in the last one.'<sup>1</sup>

July 2  
July 23

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*



1779 Furthermore, and, as it turned out, more damaging still to his operations, was the loss of a fair-weather period.

After Cordova joined, there was still further delay whilst signal books were translated and various orders agreed on between the two Admirals. Such delays are unavoidable when the fleets of two nations attempt to co-operate without previous practice together or carefully thought-out arrangements in peace time.

D'Orvilliers fully realised the immensity of his task. 'We must centre our hopes,' he wrote, 'on bravery and firmness. The combined fleet will be too numerous and of too little experience to expect good manœuvring.'<sup>1</sup>

Aug. 7 By August the 7th the combined fleet<sup>2</sup> had worked north to Ushant, and d'Orvilliers had settled the operational plan with Cordova. 'We shall search for the enemy,' he wrote to Sartine, 'along the coast as far as St. Helen's Road, and then if I find the roads empty or am able to take possession of them I shall send word to Marshal de Vaux at Havre, in accordance with your instructions, and inform him what steps I shall take to ensure the safety of his passage, which will depend on the main force of the English fleet; that is to say, I shall dispose on the one hand the combined fleet to contain the enemy, and I shall detach on the other hand a light squadron and a sufficient force of ships of the line and frigates, or I shall propose to M. de Cordova to carry out that duty in order that the army may have a clear and safe passage.

'I anticipate that then either by the battle I shall force upon the enemy or by his retreat into harbour, I shall be certain of his situation and of the success of the operations.'<sup>3</sup>

Aug. 14 On the 14th the armada was off the Lizard. On the 16th some of the ships were sighted by the *Marlborough*, who at once crowded on sail to take the news to Hardy, who was cruising to the westward of the Scilly Islands.

It will be remembered that Hardy had been forced into Plymouth by westerly winds in the last week of July. On the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI*.

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix XI.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Chevalier, *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

29th he received fresh orders from the Admiralty to the effect that as the enemy were probably going to attack the homeward-bound convoys and attempt an invasion of England, he was to take up a position to the westward to counter the enemy designs, and to remain at sea as long as possible. 1779  
July 29

The position he chose was thirty to sixty miles W.S.W. of the Scillies, 'as the most proper station for the security of the trade expected from the East and West Indies and for meeting with the fleets of the enemy should they attempt to come up Channel.'<sup>1</sup>

Anxiety for the safety of the trade was soon dispelled, as the big West Indian convoy was spoken on the 30th of July and July 30 passed up Channel before the combined fleet appeared. The East Indiamen were warned of their danger in time to take refuge in the Shannon.

But the British defensive measures were not adequate to deal with the overpowering force that had appeared in the Channel and on the French coast. Fortunately, at the critical moment, the weather and the French authorities in Paris interfered with d'Orvilliers' plan, and he underwent an experience particularly disagreeable to a Commander-in-Chief when definitely on a big undertaking.

He communicated his intentions to the Minister on the 16th Aug. 16 of August in the following terms. 'The combined fleet is at this moment becalmed and anchored in sight of the Tower at Plymouth. The weather is very unfavourable to my desire to proceed directly to St. Helen's in order to attempt to bring the enemy to action, which desire is the more important to bring about soon, because the situation of the French ships, of which I have already informed you, becomes worse every day, both because of the sickness which is prevalent and because of the small quantity of water and provisions with which they are provided. These considerations do not allow me to carry out any other project.

'To become masters of the Channel, in accordance with the King's orders, in order to bring about the passage of the land army, and in order to allow the transport of water and provisions

<sup>1</sup> Hardy's Despatch, 'Victory, to the Westward of Plymouth, August 1, 1779.'

1779 which this army will require : these are the two objects which are my business at present.' <sup>1</sup>

But that day a frigate brought him new instructions. The project for invasion had been entirely altered. The idea of a landing in the Isle of Wight and its vicinity had been abandoned. The new plan was to land the troops, or at any rate that part of the Comte de Vaux's army which was at St. Malo, on the southern coast of Cornwall in Falmouth Bay. He was further informed that it was the King's intention that the fleet should remain at sea for several months, and that a supply convoy was about to leave Brest to join him.

D'Orvilliers was naturally much upset at this last-moment change of plan. 'Full of respect and trust, Monseigneur,' he wrote, 'in the wisdom of my master and of his advice, my orders will be carried out with the utmost zeal and obedience ; but I owe it to you, to the State, and to myself, to present the following observations.' <sup>1</sup> He proceeded to explain the difficulties of remaining at sea for the long period mentioned in his instructions. If the enemy should 'fall in with our wishes,' it would be possible to meet him and engage him, and even count upon a victory, in spite of the fleet losing in efficiency from day to day ; but any battle, however fortunate the outcome, would do a certain amount of damage to several of the battleships. In order to cover them, it would be necessary to take shelter 'in some anchorage which would have to be a foreign anchorage, consequently unprotected from certain winds. The Channel, where we have no harbours, is not so safe, nor is there such facility for rendering assistance, as circumstances might require.

'The British, whose harbours are all to leeward in Westerly or South-Westerly winds, can, without any risk, send their squadrons and fleet to sea ; it is not the same for the combined forces of France and Spain. If this great collection of battleships has to withstand a Westerly gale, their only resource is to proceed up Channel and go to the Eastward ; but if the gale is from the South, S.S.W. or even from the S.W., the greater number would not be able to round the most Southerly point of the English

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

coast, from which fact it will be understood that the Navy of the two Powers is very much exposed in those waters during the Autumn and Winter. . . . 1779

' It is a great misfortune, but a misfortune which was foreseen, that our Allies joined with us so late ; but a worse calamity still is this terrible epidemic which is weakening my ships. Again, it is very unfortunate that operations cannot begin until the French fleet has come to the end of its water supply and nearly to that of its provisions.

' It is now the fourth day that we have been in sight of the Lizard and the English coast to the Eastward of that point. Nevertheless, I have not met any fishing vessel from which I might have taken practical pilots. Neither those mentioned by the Comte de Parades, nor those taken at St. Malo and elsewhere, are forthcoming, so that we sail more or less by chance and without knowledge of the dangers and currents along the coast ; the Spaniards complain about this even more than we do and grumble unceasingly.

' It has been a flat calm all day and I was obliged to anchor the fleet at 1 P.M. in order to stem the ebb tide which was carrying it to the Westward.' <sup>1</sup>

The admission that the fleet was sailing ' by chance ' is certainly surprising considering that the fleet was cruising so close to the French coast. There must have been many officers in the fleet well acquainted with the navigation of the Channel.

It is quite evident that there was indecision in Paris. A letter from the Duc de Chalelet to the Duc d'Harcourt, Commandant at Havre, written on the 28th August, reveals a state of affairs that could only result in failure :— <sup>1</sup>

' If there is one thing clear in the midst of the ambiguity in the order which was sent to you, it is that the Minister has no decided object except to risk, at all hazards, and in any circumstances, some sort of expedition against England, in order to fulfil his engagements to Spain. . . . The Court, which has changed its mind and has been unable to come to a decision—which agrees very well with the ignorance and vacillation of our Ministers

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

1779 —has wished to play on two strings (the landing in the Isle of Wight or at Falmouth), and has left it to Monsieur d'Orvilliers to decide which course he should adopt. Therefore which of these will come to pass will depend on his operations and judgment ; and between ourselves I cannot think of anything more absurd, but we shall see many others, although we have experienced a certain amount already. Our fate is therefore, as you will see, in the hands of M. d'Orvilliers. Our Ministers have behaved like weak-minded people who never know what they want to do until the moment comes to do it, and who are never happy except when giving conditional and involved orders. They have tied themselves up in every way with Spain, without knowing how they will get out of it ; they believed that events would get them out of the difficulty and eventually found themselves confronted by an obstacle which they have left M. d'Orvilliers to surmount.

' In the month of October will arise the necessity of undertaking a winter campaign, which is foolish and worse. . . . You have done very well in explaining this clearly to the Court, for, with the people with whom you have to deal, it is necessary to dot the "i's." I swear that they are even more entangled than we shall be, for they hold the frying pan by the handle ; it is true that they are not the ones who are in danger of being fried ! '

Aug. 17 On the 17th an easterly wind sprang up, and d'Orvilliers was compelled to weigh and give his attention to the safety of the fleet, instead of invasion plans. The wind gradually increased to half a gale, and by the 20th the combined fleet was forty-eight miles S.S.W. of the Lizard. Despite this misfortune, d'Orvilliers still hoped to land the army in Cornwall, but wrote to the Minister suggesting that the whole campaign should be postponed until the next year.

Aug. 25 The same wind blew Hardy to the westwards, and by the 25th he was a hundred miles to leeward of the Scillies. On that day d'Orvilliers received news of Hardy's fleet from a passing vessel. He was taken by surprise, as he thought his enemy had not moved out of Plymouth, and he called a Council of War.

The Council decided unanimously that, in view of the increase

of disease and the shortage of provisions and water, the proper course of action was to seek the enemy fleet and not attempt to re-enter the Channel. It was also decided that in any case the cruise was to end and the two fleets separate on the 8th of September. 1779

Hardy, who had been endeavouring to beat up against the easterly wind without much success, felt a favourable wind on the 26th of August, and by the 29th he had reached a position twenty-two miles south of the Scillies. Aug. 26

At 5 p.m. on that day, the weather being thick and nearly calm, one of his ships made the signal for a fleet to windward, and at 9.20 this was confirmed by an amplifying report from another ship which gave the enemy's course. Aug. 29

During the night the fleets were moving slowly under light variable winds, and next morning were out of sight of each other. But at 1 p.m. Hardy sighted eleven sail of the line, and next day, the 31st, he sighted the whole armada and bore away to the eastward. Fortunately for him the wind had veered and he held the windward position. Aug. 30  
Aug. 31

D'Orvilliers, when he sighted Hardy on the 31st, made the signal to 'chase,' but finding next morning that the British fleet had increased their distance from him, he abandoned the pursuit.

Countess Cornwallis, writing to her son, the naval captain, tells a humorous story of Hardy's retreat up Channel. 'People were diverted with the humour of the sailors belonging to Admiral Ross's ship, which has the bust of George the Second upon it. They wrapped their clothes round the head of the bust, and said George the Second should not see an English fleet chased up their own Channel.' <sup>1</sup>

Hardy anchored off Plymouth on the 1st of September and reported that he intended to proceed to Spithead to join any reinforcements, and that the fleet was very short of water. He added, 'The Combined Fleet is now in the South East. I shall do my utmost to draw them up-Channel.' <sup>2</sup> Two days later the fleet anchored at Spithead. Sept. 1

<sup>1</sup> H.M.C. Cornwallis Wykeham-Martin MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Hardy's Despatch, '*Victory*, at anchor off Plymouth, September 1, 1779.'

1779  
Oct.

Early in October the Admiralty ordered Hardy to take the fleet out to St. Helen's so as to be ready to sail at a moment's notice, as 'the fleet remaining longer in port may be attended with very bad consequences to the trade and welfare of the country.'<sup>1</sup> Hardy did not consider St. Helen's a safe anchorage, and called a meeting of Flag Officers to discuss the orders. The six Flag Officers—Hardy, Darby, Graves, Digby, Ross and Kempenfelt—signed a paper, which was forwarded to the Admiralty, stating that 'so large a fleet cannot be anchored in the Road of St. Helen's with a proper degree of safety at so late a season of the year.'<sup>1</sup>

The relations between the Admiralty and the Commander-in-Chief cannot have been good or conducive to efficiency, if, on such a matter as the anchoring of the fleet, the Admiral felt bound to obtain the moral backing of all the Flag Officers.

Oct. 7

On the 7th of October Hardy received definite intelligence that the French fleet was in the inner roads at Brest, and at once proceeded out to safeguard the arrival of convoys and the East Indiamen who had taken refuge in the Shannon.

The French fleet anchored in Brest harbour on the 14th of September. The Spanish squadrons, having parted company off the harbour, returned to their own ports. D'Orvilliers resigned, and was not employed again. He died at Moulins in 1792, aged eighty-two.

A great operation thus came to an end without a shot being fired. The whole plan could have been nipped in the bud if the Channel fleet had been stationed off Brest as soon as intelligence was received that the French fleet was preparing for sea. The British fleet was superior to the Brest fleet, but was much inferior to the combined Franco-Spanish fleet, and the one object should have been to prevent concentration.

Hardy's position to the westward of the Scillies was not well chosen, as an easterly gale would be certain to drive him a great distance from the coasts he was charged to protect. That no attempt was made on the transports at Havre and St. Malo by raiding forces shows that the lessons of the Seven Years War had been forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> Hardy's Letter to Admiralty, 'Victory at Spithead, October, 1779.

The failure of the Spaniards to join at the rendezvous at the proper date was the primary cause of the breakdown of the allied plan. It was said to be due to Spanish pride being hurt by the selection of d'Orvilliers as Commander-in-Chief in preference to Cordova. Whatever the reason, not only did sickness and lack of provisions reduce the efficiency of the ships to a very large extent, but a fine-weather period was wasted in cruising aimlessly round a rendezvous. At the same time there can have been no excuse for the French fleet sailing for major operations short of men and provisions. Doubtless if d'Orvilliers had been a stronger man, the Minister of Marine would not have been able to hustle him to sea against his better judgment. But in any case the change of plan suddenly thrust upon d'Orvilliers threw away any chance of success that previously existed. To organise a vast fleet and a great army for the purpose of invasion, to issue all the orders and to entrust the enterprise to carefully selected commanders, and then to change the object and plan at the last moment could only have one result, disaster. We can imagine d'Orvilliers' feelings. To command a combined fleet of well-found ships and operate to a fixed plan would have been a hard task for any Admiral, but with ill-found ships and a changing plan no man could have succeeded. He must have stepped ashore for the last time with a feeling of great relief.

Kempenfelt's remarks on these operations are illuminating. 'I think I may safely hazard an opinion,' he wrote, 'that twenty-five sail of the line, coppered, would be sufficient to hazard and tease this great, unwieldy, combined armada, so as to prevent their effecting anything; hanging continually upon them, ready to catch at any opportunity of a separation from night, gale or fog; to dart upon the separated, to cut off any convoys of provisions coming to them; and if they attempted an invasion, to oblige the whole fleet to escort the transports, and even then it would be impossible to protect them entirely from so active and nimble a fleet.'<sup>1</sup> This is reminiscent of the Elizabethan seamen and the Spanish Armada, but it is doubtful if d'Orvilliers would

<sup>1</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, 'Victory, Spithead, September 5, 1780' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).



1779 have allowed himself to be forced to 'accompany the transports.' He had quite clear ideas as to the necessity of defeating or containing the British fleet before he attempted to pass the transports across the Channel, and in this he showed that he was a much better strategist than his predecessors in the Seven Years War, who always planned to invade by evasion and who consequently came to grief.

Paul Jones was again active during the year. His force had been increased, and consisted of the *Bon Homme Richard*, forty guns; *Alliance*, thirty-two guns; *Pallas*, thirty guns; and *Vengeance*, twelve guns. With this force he took a number of prizes off the coast of Scotland during August. On the 16th he anchored a little below Inchkeith with the intention of attacking the shipping in Leith Roads next day, but a gale of wind compelled Aug. 16 him to give up the plan. On the 23rd he fell in with a British Aug. 23 convoy from the Baltic off the Yorkshire coast, and a fierce engagement took place between the *Bon Homme Richard* and the escort ship *Serapis* of forty-four guns. The *Serapis* was eventually compelled to strike after losing fifty-four killed and seventy-five wounded out of a total complement of 264. The French casualties were about 116, and the *Bon Homme Richard* was so badly knocked about that she sank the day after the engagement. Pearson, the Captain of the *Serapis*, was knighted for his gallant conduct.

Throughout the year British cruisers and privateers were operating in the Channel, off Finisterre, and in the neighbourhood of the Azores, and, as an example of their depredations on enemy commerce, the successes of the privateers and Letters of Marque belonging to Liverpool alone are given by Beatson as sixty prizes worth over a million pounds sterling.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FIRST RELIEF OF GIBRALTAR, 1780

PARLIAMENT met in November 1779, and the King's Speech was a spirited call for united effort in view of the many enemies that threatened the Kingdom. 1780

The addresses were combated with great eloquence by the Opposition, but were carried by a considerable majority, and the Government obtained the large supplies they demanded. Eighty-five thousand seamen and marines were voted, and the estimates for the services reached the high figure of £21,196,000. The dockyards were called on to fit every available ship for service, and amongst the new appointments was that of Sir George Brydges Rodney, Bart., to the command of the Leeward Islands Station.

Rodney had ruined himself by gambling and was taking refuge from his creditors in Paris when the war broke out. Thanks to the generosity of a Frenchman, Marshal Biron, he had been saved from imprisonment as a debtor, and was thus given a lift on the ladder of fame by a native of the country for whose defeat he was to be mainly responsible. He had proved himself a fine dashing officer in the Seven Years War, though prone to give undue importance to the acquisition of prize-money when selecting his object. Now, though a martyr to gout and a wreck of his old self, he was to prove that the fires could be rekindled in emergency and that he possessed considerable powers as a fleet commander.

A letter from the French Government to their Ambassador in Madrid reveals the Allies' plan of operations for the year 1780. 'The project of a descent upon England is abandoned provisionally. To blockade Gibraltar, to have in America and Asia force sufficient

1780 to hold the British in check and to take the offensive in the West Indies is the plan of campaign.'

We may pause for a moment to glance at Fleurieu's plan, which was prepared in November 1779. He calculated on sixty-five ships of the line, sixty frigates, and ninety corvettes, and examined the following five possibilities:—(1) conquer British possessions in the West Indies; (2) decisive operations in the Indian Ocean; (3) vigorous offensive in the United States; (4) war against trade; (5) invasion of the British Islands.

The first two he put aside on account of the season being too advanced, and the impossibility of carrying out the necessary preparations. He considered that the expense and duration of operations in North America could not be estimated or the issue foreseen, and that trade war would be unlikely to achieve anything decisive. He therefore concluded that the invasion plan was the best.

None the less, having started as a convert to the idea of using maximum force for one great object, he once more showed that he believed in disjointed operations, for in elaborating the invasion plan he included major operations such as the reduction of Gibraltar and the conquest of Minorca.

1779  
June 21

But whatever the French view may have been as to the desirability of locking up available power in operations against the British stronghold at Gibraltar, there was only one view in Spain. It was the place they coveted more than any other, either in Europe or the Western Hemisphere. The Rock had actually been blockaded since the 21st of June, 1779, when the Spanish General Mendoza wrote to General Eliott that he had received orders to cut off all communications by sea and land between Spain and the British garrison. Eliott, a veteran of the Seven Years War, had been Governor since May 1777. He had worked hard at improving the fortifications and had introduced a scheme for using red-hot shot. The garrison consisted of five line regiments, three battalions of Hanoverian troops and three companies of artillery. The only men-of-war in the Mediterranean were a sixty-gun ship, three frigates and a sloop under Vice-Admiral Robert Duff.

By the 26th of July the Spanish land forces had taken up a position two miles from the outer works of the fortress, and a co-operating squadron of fifteen cruisers commanded by Don Antonio Barcelo had established a blockade of the Bay. These cruisers, operating under the shadow of a squadron of ships of the line at Algeciras and the main fleet at Cadiz, were unhampered in their work and seized all vessels bound for Gibraltar, whether neutral or British. 1779  
July

The garrison, fired by Elliott's example, was very active in defence. The splendid work of the artillery kept the enemy at a distance, and one of the many fine feats to the credit of the garrison was the mounting of a 24-pounder gun at the highest point of the Rock, which necessitated the cutting of a road and weeks of strenuous labour. But by the close of the year provisions were getting short. Flour was being sold at a shilling a pound, a chicken fetched fourteen shillings, a turkey two guineas, and there was no fresh meat.

The New Year brought relief to Elliott's hard-pressed force. On the 15th of January a ship flying a British flag was seen entering the harbour. She was an ordnance vessel who had run the blockade, and, before long, news had passed round the men on watch at their guns, that a relieving force was approaching. That night another ship arrived with stories of the capture of a large Spanish convoy, and three days later the garrison's cup of joy was filled when a frigate ran in with the thrilling news that part of the Spanish main fleet had been destroyed. Before long the blockading ships retired from the Bay, and, on the 22nd, British men-of-war and merchant ships were seen making for the harbour. 1780  
Jan. 15  
Jan. 22

We must now turn back to the operations of the relieving fleet before it arrived at Gibraltar.

The conditions on the Rock were well-known to the British Government, and, as nothing could be expected from Duff's poor little squadron, and as a convoy sent from England would have to pass all the enemy's main naval bases, the only course of action was to send a strong naval force as escort to the provision ships.

Rodney, with five ships of the line, was under orders to sail

1780 with the Leeward Islands trade, and the Government decided to entrust him with the task of relieving Gibraltar before crossing the Atlantic. His own force was insufficient, and orders were given for a large part of the Channel fleet to join him for the operation.<sup>1</sup> He was much delayed by contrary winds and administrative difficulties. 'The delays that have been at this port,' he wrote, 'and the almost total loss of naval discipline is almost beyond comprehension. It shall be mine to restore it.'<sup>2</sup> This was not a very flattering tribute to Hardy, Keppel and the Port Admirals.

Finally the armada, consisting of twenty-two ships of the line, fourteen frigates, and a vast number of store ships, victuallers, ordnance vessels, troopships and merchantmen, sailed on December 29th.

- Jan. 4 On the 4th of January, when about 420 miles west of Rochefort, Rodney detached the trade for the West Indies. At daybreak
- Jan. 8 on the 8th an enemy fleet of twenty-two sail was sighted bearing north-east. Rodney immediately ordered a general chase. The *Bienfaisant*, 64, soon came up with the *Guipuscoana*, 54, which surrendered and was renamed *Prince William* as a compliment to the Duke of Clarence then serving as a midshipman in the fleet. The remainder of the Spanish ships, consisting of six frigates and sixteen heavily laden merchant ships whose cargoes were consigned to the Spanish fleet at Cadiz, surrendered as soon as they were overhauled, those of the captured ships that carried provisions joining up with the main British convoy, and the remainder being sent to England under escort.

- Jan. 16 Rodney then continued on his course and spoke several vessels who had recently seen a Spanish fleet in the vicinity of Cape St. Vincent. He accordingly warned his Captains, and passed the Cape on the morning of the 16th in good order and prepared for battle. He was not to be disappointed. Shortly after noon, when the fleet was twelve miles south of the Cape, a ship of the line reported a fleet bearing south-east.

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix XVII.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney to Germain, 'St. Helen's, getting under sail, December 25, 1779' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

Rodney at once crowded on sail and formed his fleet into line abreast. As he drew nearer to the strangers he saw that they too were making more sail and were forming into line of battle on the starboard tack. He at once made the signal for 'general chase.' With a fresh westerly wind to help, the British ships, with their coppered bottoms, very soon closed the intervening distance, and the strangers were discovered to be a Spanish fleet of eleven ships of the line and two frigates.<sup>1</sup>

Rodney then made the signal for his ships to engage 'as they came up by rotation and to take the lee gage in order to prevent the enemy's retreat into their own ports.'<sup>2</sup>

By four o'clock the leading ships—*Defence*, *Resolution* and *Edgar*—were up with the enemy's rear ships and Rodney signalled to engage closely. The Spaniards were in no formation to fight or support each other, and, though they displayed courage, their defeat was only a question of time.

A little before five o'clock the *Santo Domingo* of seventy guns blew up and, of all her crew of 600 men, only one was picked up next day by a frigate. The action was continued through the dark and squally night, the British ships pushing on, fighting, and from time to time forcing an enemy ship to strike.

At two in the morning, 'the *Monarca*, the headmost of the enemy's ships, having struck to the *Sandwich* after receiving one broadside,'<sup>2</sup> Rodney made the signal for the fleet to bring to on the port tack. By this time the wind had increased to half a gale and a high sea was running, and great difficulty was experienced in shifting prisoners and taking possession of the prizes, which consisted of five seventy-gun ships and one eighty-gun ship which carried the flag of Admiral Don Juan de Langara.

The weather grew steadily worse. Next morning the two junior flagships, *Royal George* and *Prince George*, made signals that they had sounded and were in shoal water, and Rodney had difficulty in extracting the fleet from a bad position. Two of the prizes, with only a Lieutenant, some petty officers and about fifty seamen on board, were unable to make sufficient sail to get

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix XIX.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, Gibraltar Bay, January 27, 1780.

1780 off the lee shore and were driven towards Cadiz, one being wrecked and the other retaken by the Spaniards.

In the evening Rodney despatched frigates to Tangier to 'acquaint the Consul with our success' and 'inform him that Great Britain was again Mistress of the Streights.'<sup>1</sup>

During the action Rodney was confined to his bed with gout, and credit for the victory was given by many to Young, his Flag-Captain. The latter, writing to Middleton, complained that Rodney did not make the signal to 'chase' soon enough, that he himself proposed the 'line abreast' signal, that he crowded on sail on his own responsibility to save time, and that Rodney 'on account of his ill state of health and natural irresolution' attempted several times to 'have the ships called off from chase.'<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Sir Gilbert Blane, the physician to the fleet, recorded that Rodney and Young discussed the situation at sunset and 'decided to persist in the same course with the signal to engage to leeward.'

Rodney could not leave his cabin, and so must have visualised the situation from time to time by the accounts of others. He probably deferred to Young's advice to a certain extent, but the credit for the success was his. Whatever happened, the responsibility from beginning to end rested with the Admiral. He approved of a course of action that placed his fleet in considerable danger near a lee shore, and in taking this decision showed that he had not yet lost his fire and courage.

He attributed much of his success to the coppering of his ships. 'To bring the enemy to action,' he wrote, 'copper-bottomed ships are absolutely necessary. Without them we should not have taken one Spanish ship.'<sup>3</sup> He was highly pleased with the handling of the ships and the bravery displayed by all ranks and ratings. His Captains certainly distinguished themselves on that dark, stormy night when there was no confusion, no mistaking friend for foe, no hanging back from the task in hand.

On the other hand, the Spanish seamen, though they fought

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, Gibraltar Bay, January 27, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Lord Barham*, vol. i. (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>3</sup> Rodney to Germain, January 27, Gibraltar Bay (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

with gallantry, were handicapped by their slow rate of fire, and 1780  
were overwhelmed by the well-served British broadsides.

The Spanish strategy on this occasion was bad. It was obvious that an attempt would be made to revictual the Gibraltar garrison. Cordova commanded a fleet of twenty Spanish and four French ships of the line at Cadiz, but he preferred to remain in harbour. Excuse for his inactivity was found in the inefficient state of the Spanish ships and their bad sailing qualities, but Rodney wrote after the action, 'The Spanish men-of-war we have taken are much superior to ours.'<sup>1</sup> No frigates or small craft were ordered out to patrol and give early warning of the approach of hostile vessels, with the result that Langara's squadron was surprised by a superior force.

On the 19th Rodney ordered Digby to lead the fleet into Jan. 19  
Gibraltar and sent two frigates ahead to announce his coming, but the weather was so bad that many of the ships, unable to make the harbour, were driven to leeward, and it was not until the 26th that the whole fleet was anchored off the Rock. Jan. 26

Don Barcelo did not attempt to disturb the operations. He took the wiser course of ordering his fleet of five of the line and all the smaller craft to anchor under the fortifications at Algeciras, where he laid booms and mounted a number of additional guns to guard the anchorage. With the enemy located in harbour and unlikely to move, Rodney was able to detach the store ships and victuallers for Minorca under escort of three ships of the line and a frigate, and the work of preparing the Spanish prizes for service in the fleet was undisturbed.

The troops he had brought out raised the strength of the garrison to 6,500 men, and, as a large number of the civil population had fled in boats and neutral vessels when the enemy first opened fire, the Rock was now more easily defended.

His work at Gibraltar accomplished, Rodney sailed for the West Indies on the 15th of February, taking with him the whole Feb 15  
fleet, except one ship of the line which he left behind to escort home the store ships and victuallers that were not ready. When three

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Lady Rodney, 'Gibraltar, February 7, 1780' (*Mundy's Life of Rodney*).



1780 days out, he detached Digby with the Channel fleet division, prizes and store ships, to England. The Government censured him for leaving a ship of the line at Gibraltar. 'It has given us the trouble and risk of sending a frigate on purpose to order her home immediately, and if you will look into your original instructions you will find that there was no point more strongly guarded against than that of your leaving any line-of-battle ship behind you.'

Rodney was not satisfied that he would be in sufficient strength in the West Indies to accomplish all that would be expected of him.

He wrote to Germain from Gibraltar : 'I own myself a little disappointed in finding I am to take but four of the copper-bottomed ships with me. I had flattered myself that the six sail from Plymouth were to be added to the four I took with me from Portsmouth. That force would have been fully sufficient.'<sup>1</sup>

And to the Admiralty : 'I flattered myself that the greater part of the copper-bottomed ships who sailed with me from England would have been ordered to have accompanied me to the West Indies. I must therefore humbly submit to Their Lordships' consideration whether, considering the state of His Majesty's ships at present in the West Indies, it will be in my power to force the enemy to Battle, without they are equally desirous of it as myself, unless Their Lordships are pleased to order an additional number of copper-bottomed or clean ships from England in the lieu of such as they may please to order home.'<sup>2</sup>

The joy of the Gibraltar garrison on sighting Rodney's fleet was no more than the joy in England. At last a success had been obtained, and the Admiral received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament and the freedom of the City of London. The First Lord summed up the success in a letter to Rodney : 'You have taken more line-of-battle ships than had been captured in any one action in either of the last preceding wars.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Germain, 'January 27, Gibraltar Bay' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, Gibraltar, February 11, 1780.'

<sup>3</sup> Sandwich to Rodney, 'Admiralty, March 8, 1780' (Mundy's *Life of Rodney*).

Rodney had many long months of campaigning in the West Indies and many battles before him. During the remainder of his service afloat he was to be in command of great fleets on which almost everything depended. But, if his service had ended with the relief of Gibraltar, he would still have deserved an honoured position amongst British sea-commanders. He not only proved equal to the task confided to him, but showed he was ready to take big risks to compel his enemy to battle and surrender. 1780

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FIGHT FOR THE WEST INDIAN ISLANDS—THIRD PHASE—1780

1780 It will be remembered that Rear-Admiral Hyde Parker had been left in command of the Leeward Islands Station, when Byron returned home in August 1779. During the early part of the year he had under his command sixteen ships of the line and fourteen frigates. This force was much superior to the squadrons under de Grasse and La Motte-Picquet, left behind by d'Estaing when he sailed for France.

Feb. Parker's cruisers maintained a continual patrol off Fort Royal, and, early in February, he received a report that Picquet had sailed. He at once weighed and divided his fleet into two chasing squadrons, one under his own command, and the other under Commodore Thomas Collingwood.

But Picquet had no intention of fighting, and made for shelter under the guns of Basseterre in Guadeloupe. There he remained undisturbed and unwatched, for Parker, in the meantime, had received news that a large French force, under the command of M. de Guichen, was expected shortly from Europe. The only course of action was to concentrate, and Parker issued orders for every available ship to proceed to St. Lucia.

Mar. 22 De Guichen arrived at Martinique on the 22nd of March with sixteen of the line, four frigates and eighty-three merchant ships, and at once concocted measures with de Bouillé for an attack on the British islands. With the ships he found on the station he could count on twenty-three of the line. His first plan was to attack St. Lucia, but the orders were cancelled when the extent of the British defensive measures was ascertained. He had a further reason for abandoning the expedition, as news reached

him of Rodney's arrival on the station, when he was hove to off the island. The British Commander, fresh from his triumph in Spanish waters, arrived at Carlisle Bay, Barbados, with four ships of the line on the 17th. He expected to find letters from Parker with recent intelligence and a rendezvous, but there was no ship in the harbour nor 'any person whom Rear-Admiral Parker has entrusted with the rendezvous.' <sup>1</sup> 1780 Mar. 17

Not being well, he went ashore and ordered the senior Captain to cruise for enemy convoys. He soon recovered his health and set sail for St. Lucia, where he arrived on the 27th. He there took over the command of the whole fleet of twenty-one ships of the line, with Rear-Admirals Rowley and Hyde Parker and Commodores Collingwood and Hotham as divisional leaders. The fleet was not as powerful as it appeared on paper, for those ships that had remained in the West Indies since the second phase of the fighting were not in efficient condition.

Rodney's Flag-Captain wrote to Middleton after the first action—'If you do not get home the *Princess Royal*, *Albion*, *Suffolk*, *Magnificent*, *Vigilant*, *Trident*, *Stirling Castle*, *Elizabeth* and *Grafton* they will in four months share the fate of the two former [referring to *Cornwall* and *Fame*] who are now totally lost. What Admiral Parker did respecting those ships last hurricane months by keeping them in this country he is to answer for: but we have found it a normal squadron only.'

By contrast the majority of de Guichen's ships had recently arrived from home and had not undergone the rigours of the hurricane season, nor had they lacked a proper dockyard.

On the 2nd of April Rodney took his fleet <sup>2</sup> to sea and stood down to Fort Royal. He cruised off the harbour for two days, 'near enough to count all their guns and at times within random shot of some of their forts,' <sup>3</sup> but as the enemy showed no signs of coming out he returned to Gros Islet Bay, leaving some copper-bottomed ships on patrol. He anchored 'ready at a moment's April 2

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, Barbadoes, March 17, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix XV.

<sup>3</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.'

1780 warning to cut or slip in order to pursue or engage the enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

De Bouillé and de Guichen meanwhile conceived the idea of embarking a number of troops on board the fleet and attempting the capture of Barbados before Rodney could come to its assistance. Their expeditionary force, consisting of twenty-two ships of the line, five frigates and three corvettes,<sup>2</sup> carrying 8,000 troops under de Bouillé in addition to the ordinary complement, sailed April 13 from Fort Royal on the 13th. A convoy for San Domingo, which was to part company as soon as the coast was clear, accompanied the fleet.

Rodney's look-out ships did not fail him, and he was soon at sea with his whole fleet.

April 16 On the 16th Rodney sighted de Guichen about twenty-four miles to leeward of the Pearl Rock. The British fleet was at once ordered to chase to the north-west, and by five in the evening the enemy's fleet 'were plainly discovered'<sup>3</sup> and counted.

A little before sunset Rodney formed his ships into line of battle steering north-west and ordered the *Venus* and *Greyhound* frigates to keep station between the two fleets during the night and observe the enemy's movements. The task of shadowing was 'admirably well attended to by that good and veteran officer Captain Ferguson.'

April 17 At 1 A.M. next day de Guichen formed line of battle on the same course as the British fleet, and at 5.30 he turned his fleet round, by tacking together, and steered to the southward. Rodney thought these manœuvres indicated a wish to avoid action, 'which I was determined they should not.'<sup>3</sup>

At 5.45 he made the general signal to 'Form line of battle ahead at two cables length asunder' in order to get all his ships into their proper station after the night.

At 6.45 he gave 'notice by publick signal' that it was 'my intention to attack the enemy's rear with my whole force, which

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix XV.

<sup>3</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.'

signal was answered by every ship in the fleet.' At 7.0 the fleet being 'much extended,' he ordered his ships to close to one cable's length asunder, as he intended to attack in the closest possible formation. 1780

The fleets were now passing one another on opposite courses, and, as the French ships were strung out at much greater intervals than the British, the time was rapidly approaching for Rodney to turn down and attack his objective, the rear.

Whilst Rodney was closing up his line, de Guichen 'signalled to tack together so as to get into quarter-line and to get to windward of the enemy, but he annulled the signal because in order to form line of battle on the starboard tack in reversed order it would have been necessary for ships to get into the wake of their next ahead by a movement in succession, which it was disadvantageous to carry out in presence of an enemy, since this would appear as a retreating operation.'<sup>1</sup> An interesting sidelight on French tactical thought of the day.

At 8.30 Rodney, seeing the moment had come to attack, made the signal for his ships to form on a line of bearing N. by W. and S. by E. The fleet was soon running down before the wind in compact order ready to open fire. (Diagram No. 9.) But Rodney was not yet to come to grips with his enemy, for de Guichen had already made the signal for turning his fleet round and steering to the northward. Rodney thought that de Guichen had guessed his intention. 'This signal was penetrated by them who discovered my intention.'<sup>2</sup> But from de la Charoulière's report it is evident that the French Admiral had decided to turn his fleet before Rodney commenced to run down towards him.

Still intent on attacking a part of the enemy's force with his whole fleet, Rodney signalled to his ships to haul to the wind on the port tack in order to regain position, and so the fleets again passed by on opposite courses.

At 10.10 he made the signal for ships to wear round so as to

<sup>1</sup> Log of Lieutenant de la Charoulière, Chief of Staff to de Guichen (French National Archives).

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.'

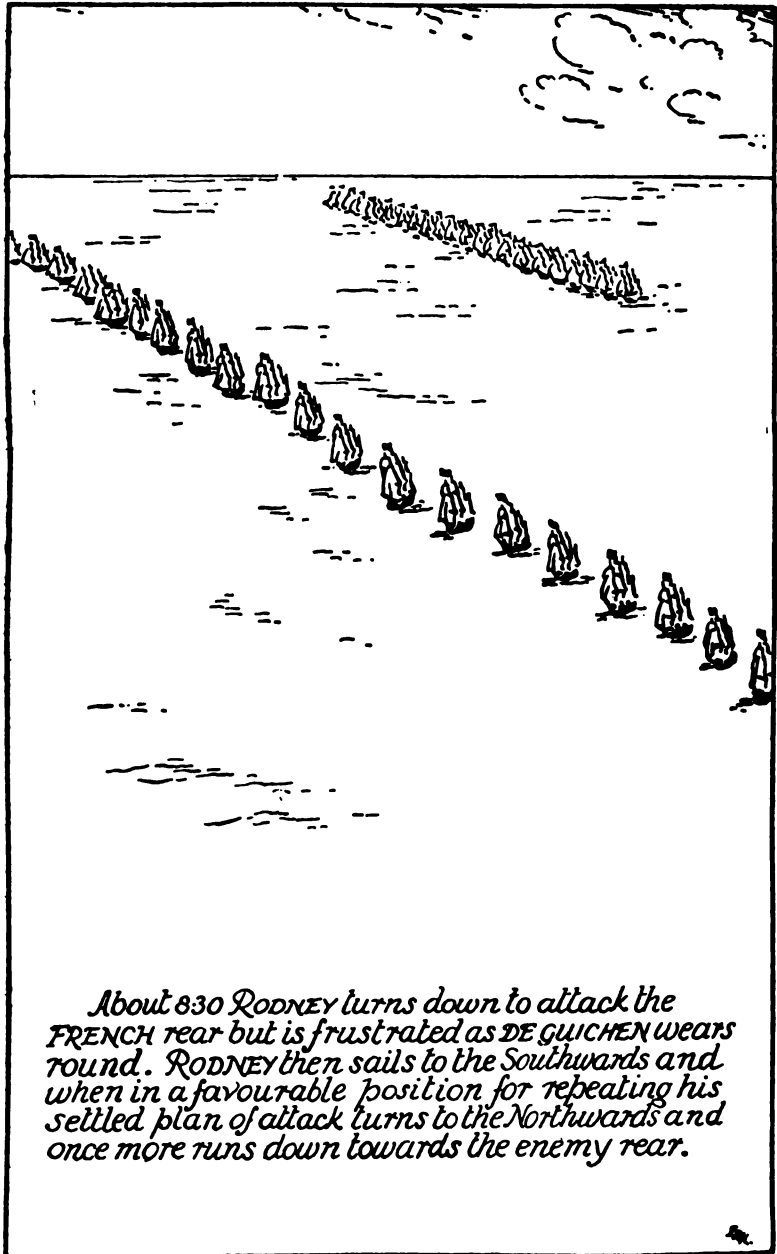


DIAGRAM 9.—BATTLE OF MARTINIQUE, APRIL 17TH, 1780, 8.45 A.M.

bring the fleet on a parallel course to the enemy, but some delay occurred and the rear ship, the *Stirling Castle*, had to be signalled to individually, as she was not obeying. 1780

But by 10.36 the ships were round and the signal for 'line of battle at two cables distance was hoisted,' followed at 11.0 by the signals 'Prepare for battle,' 'Alter course to port.'

A few minutes later the fleet was slanting down towards the enemy. At 11.28 the rear division were ordered to close the centre, and it is evident from this signal that the formation was already losing some of its compactness.

At 11.50 the vital signal for every ship to 'steer for her opposite in the enemy's line agreeable to the 21st article of the Additional Fighting Instructions' was hoisted, and five minutes later 'Engage' and 'Come to a closer engagement' were flying from the flagship masthead.

In the meantime the French Admiral had been giving orders to 'crowd sail, close up the line, prepare for battle and give the password and recognition signal,'<sup>1</sup> but had not materially altered his course or formation.

We can imagine Rodney's thoughts at this moment. He had exercised great patience, he had been manœuvring his fleet for several hours with one definite object, and now at last he was about to deliver a blow with all his force on a portion of the enemy's fleet. A great victory with all it would mean to himself and his country was almost within his grasp.

Then, suddenly, all his hopes were dashed to the ground. To his intense mortification he saw the northern wing ship, the *Stirling Castle*, commanded by Carkett, turning towards the enemy's leading ship, and soon after the whole of Hyde Parker's van division steering for the enemy's van. (Diagram No. 10.)

The whole plan was ruined, and it was too late to put matters right by signal before the clash came. The fleet was now committed to a disjointed effort, instead of the concentrated attack which had been so laboriously prepared.

About 1 P.M. the first shots were fired by some of the van ships, and shortly afterwards the flagship *Sandwich* was in close

<sup>1</sup> Log of Lieutenant de la Charoulière.



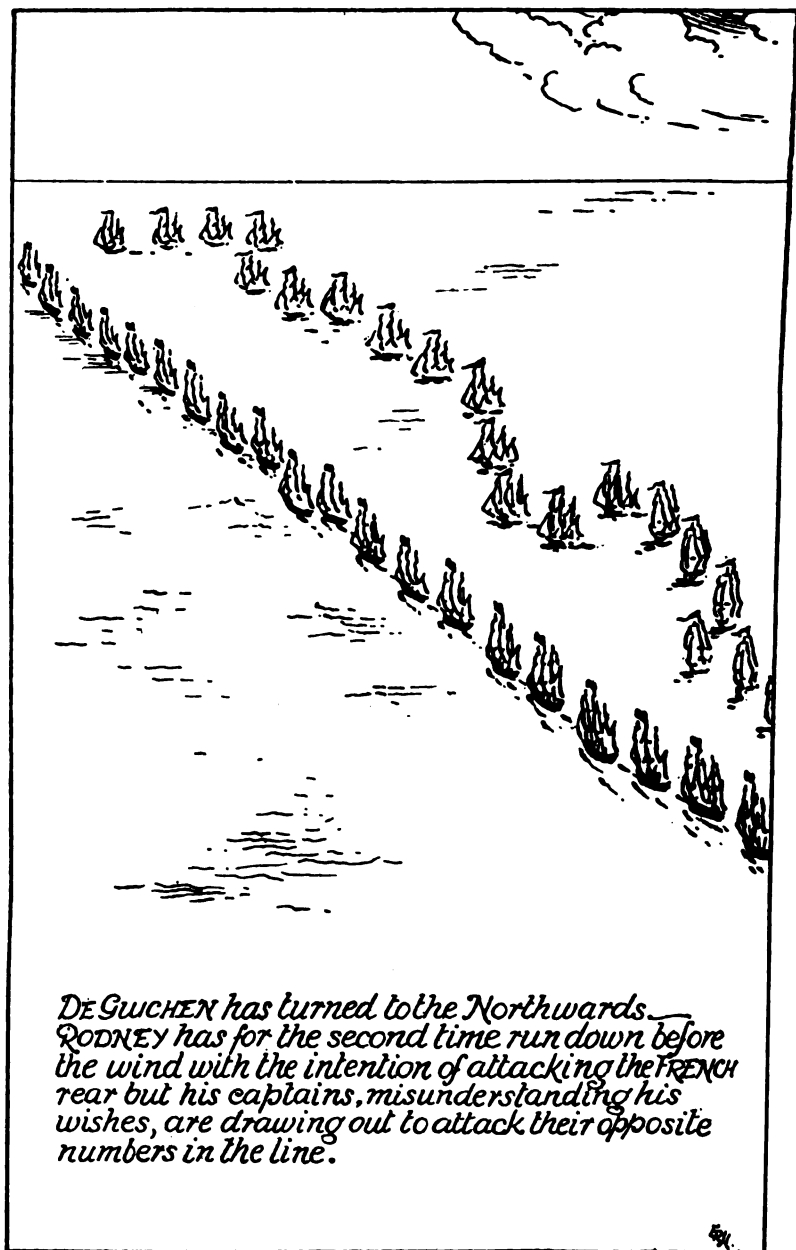


DIAGRAM 10.—BATTLE OF MARTINIQUE, APRIL 17TH, 1780, 12.30 P.M.

action with the *Actionnaire* of sixty-four guns, whose position in the line was next but one astern of the French flagship. 1780

The *Actionnaire* having been forced out of the line, the *Intrépide*, 74, came up to challenge the *Sandwich*, and she too was driven down to leeward.

By this time the *Sandwich* had drifted to leeward of the French line, and the French flagship, *Couronne*, was close to her on the weather bow.

Rodney, surveying the scene through the smoke, saw the *Yarmouth* lying to windward of the enemy's line with her sails aback and the *Cornwall* on the weather bow of the *Couronne*, and at once signalled to these ships to 'Come to closer engagement' to support him. The *Yarmouth* had previously received a signal to 'Make more sail,' but was still hanging back.

'Perceiving several of our ships engaging at a distance, I repeated the signal for a close action. With truth, but sorrow, I must say it was little attended to.'<sup>1</sup>

When the *Actionnaire* was beaten out of the line a gap was caused, and de Guichen had no doubt that Rodney intended to lead his division through the gap and cut off the French rear ships' rear. The *Sandwich* and the ships astern of her were making more sail at the time, and this helped to confirm de Guichen's suspicions.

He therefore ordered his fleet to wear round so as to cut off the British flagship and the ships immediately astern of her should the expected cut through take place, but he annulled the signal shortly afterwards when he saw that his suspicions were unfounded. Three French ships, including the *Couronne*, then vigorously attacked the *Sandwich*, and, though battered for an hour and a half, she put up such a splendid fight that she was able to draw away under sail to windward.

In the meantime Parker and Rowley had each driven a ship out of the line, but had themselves received considerable damage.

Before any decision was reached the French bore up and ran

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.'

1780 down wind, and, as the British ships remained close-hauled, the fleets separated and the action came to an end.

The losses in this fight were British killed 120, wounded 354 ; French killed 222, wounded 537. The *Sandwich* bore the brunt of the fighting and came out of the action with eighty shot in her hull. She had fired 3,288 rounds from her broadsides.

As soon as his damage was repaired, Rodney again sought April 20 out the French fleet, and on the 20th sighted them and made the signal to chase. He shaped course so as to take up position between the enemy and their base at Fort Royal, but de Guichen was not prepared to fight his way through, and sought shelter under the batteries of Basseterre.

Rodney then stationed 'frigates to windward and leeward of every island to give notice of approach,' but he was getting anxious about the state of his fleet. 'I shall be able to keep the sea for some days, but the condition of the fleet is such that unless reinforced by a squadron from Europe, it will be impossible to continue it.'<sup>1</sup>

Both Admirals claimed victory in this memorable action. Rodney wrote that 'At the conclusion of the Battle the enemy might be said to be completely beaten,' but the distance of the van and rear from the centre and the crippled condition of the ships made it impossible to pursue.<sup>1</sup>

De Guichen reported that 'It was unnatural to think that they could have broken off action so early, and he that retires is the loser ; consequently we had the advantage of the day's work. We remained masters of the field of action.'<sup>2</sup>

The French Admiral was evidently thinking in terms of battle on land. There is no merit in remaining 'master' of a portion of the sea for a night if the next day is spent running away from an enemy who bars the entrance to the main base.

The French strategy on this occasion was thoroughly unsound. De Guichen's plans of evading Rodney in order to attack the

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> De Guichen's Despatch, quoted by Castex in *Les Idées Militaires du XVIII<sup>me</sup>. siècle*.

island deserved to fail. Even if faulty scouting work by his enemy or a lucky wind had enabled him to avoid the British fleet at the outset, under what conditions could ship-supported land operations be undertaken with a strong enemy fleet in the neighbourhood? It is sufficient to imagine the situation that would have confronted de Guichen if a frigate had run in with the signal flying for an enemy fleet whilst troops were being disembarked. As so often happened, the French Admiral was much handicapped by his orders from home. He was told 'to keep the sea so far as the force maintained by England in the Windward Islands would permit without too far compromising the fleet entrusted to him.'

The tactical aspect is full of interest. Rodney was bitterly angry at what he considered the failure of the van ships to carry out his orders. He had brought original thought to bear on naval tactics; he had come to the conclusion that 'to fight ships for ships was contrary to common sense, and that the duty of an Admiral is to keep all his fleet in order to attack the half or a smaller portion of the enemy'; he had at last got the opportunity he had been waiting for, the windward position, and a worthy opponent, and all his fine scheme had fallen to the ground. He did not attempt to disguise his feelings when writing his despatch. 'The French Admiral, who appeared to be a brave and gallant officer, had the honour to be nobly supported during the whole action. 'Tis with concern inexpressible, mixt with indignation, that the duty I owe my sovereign and my country obliges me to acquaint Your Lordships that during the action with the French fleet on the 17th instant His Majesty's—the British flag—was not properly supported.'<sup>1</sup> This part of the official letter was suppressed, but private letters could not be stopped, and it was soon a matter of general knowledge that things had not gone right.

Of Carkett he wrote, 'His leading in a manner so contrary to my open and avowed indication of bringing the whole force of His Majesty's fleet against the enemy's rear' was a primary cause of the failure.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, off Fort Royal Bay, Martinique, April 26, 1780.'

1780 After the action Rodney called on Rowley to explain 'why he was at so great a distance from the centre and did not obey signals.'

Rowley replied that when the enemy's rear gave way he followed them, as he 'had conceived from the signal you made previous to the action that 'twas your intention to make your greatest impression on the rear.'<sup>1</sup>

Three months later Rodney commended five Captains in an official letter, but added, 'More certificates I have not given nor shall any consideration in this life induce me so far to prostitute my honour and character as an officer as to give under my hand what is not really dictated by my conscience and heart.'<sup>2</sup> The conduct of the two junior flag officers, Parker and Rowley, was severely censured in the words 'To inattention to signals both in the van and rear divisions, is to be attributed the loss of that glorious opportunity (perhaps never to be recovered) of terminating the naval contest in these seas.'<sup>2</sup>

Of three Captains in Parker's division Rodney remarked, 'they meant well and could have done their duty had they been permitted,'<sup>2</sup> thus implying that their divisional commander had compelled them to take a course contrary to their intentions.

The only public action taken at the time was a court-martial on Bateman, the Captain of the *Yarmouth*, on a charge of lying to windward and not engaging. He was dismissed the service, a tragic end to a man who had started life as an able seaman and had been specially promoted to the quarter-deck for gallantry at the Battle of Toulon (1744). Hyde Parker—'Vinegar' Parker—went home shortly afterwards in a state of fury, and was with difficulty restrained from opening a pamphleteering attack on Rodney.

What were the true causes of this failure? Carkett of the *Stirling Castle* was a fine fighting veteran, Rowley had proved himself a man of initiative and courage in Byron's action off Grenada, Parker's record of service was a good one, and of the others it may safely be said they were experienced and courageous

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure to Rodney's Despatch, April 26, 1780.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Princess Royal, Gros Islet Bay, July 13, 1780.'

fighting men. Yet nearly all failed to do what was expected of them. 1780

One obvious cause was the inadequacy of the signalling system then in use.

When Rodney made the signal in the early morning that he intended to attack the rear of the enemy, he wished to convey to his captains that that was going to be his tactical purpose, and that any subsequent manœuvring would be with that object. If de Guichen had not parried his first attempt by turning, it is possible that the British Captains would have understood what was expected of them, whatever subsequent signals had been made.

But, by the time Rodney was in a position to execute his manœuvre, some hours had passed, and both fleets had turned round at least once, with the result that, when the signal was made for 'Every ship to bear down and steer for her opposite in the enemy's line,' the majority of his Captains understood that 'opposite' meant the corresponding ship in the enemy's line, and the early morning signal was forgotten. Again, the alteration of course to port which caused the fleet to slant down towards the enemy served to aggravate any difficulties they found in interpreting the vital signal. 'Take your opposite number' was a safe rule when in any doubt. Rodney in a letter to Carkett stressed the point that he had made a signal ordering ships to be two cables apart, and that therefore there was no justification for the van leading away from the centre. But the whole argument revolves round the meaning of the word 'opposite' in the signal. The minutes of the court martial show that the unfortunate Bateman was no coward but was simply obsessed with the idea that he must get alongside the ninth ship from the enemy's van and no other.

Doubtless the system of signalling in use was inadequate, and doubtless some of the Captains did not display much imagination or initiative, but, when all is said and done, the principal reason for the failure was that the Captains did not know what was in Rodney's mind, and Rodney did not place much trust or confidence in his subordinates.

1780      Twenty-nine years after the event, Sir Gilbert Blane stated that he well remembered Rodney telling him that all the Captains had been informed of the general plan of attack either orally or by letter. But in the event a corps of experienced officers did not understand what was required, and, if we accept Blane's story, we can only conclude that the orders were not clear.

Rodney neither knew his officers well nor made any attempt to inculcate in them his strategical and tactical ideas, with the result that he did not lead into battle a band of brothers who knew instinctively what was required of them whatever unforeseen circumstances might arise.

De Guichen had no intention of moving from his defended anchorage so long as Rodney barred the way to Fort Royal, but the condition of the ships, the ocean currents, and the necessity for proper refit and victualling soon compelled the British fleet to return to its base at St. Lucia.

The wretched condition of the ships was described in strong terms by Young in a letter to Middleton: 'The Fleet is in a shattered condition. For God's sake and our country's send out copper-bottomed ships to relieve the foul and crippled ones with masts and stores of all kinds. With those, everything will be done; if you do not but misery and disaster must ensue.'

Rodney left Commodore Collingwood and five of the line to watch off Fort Royal, and also stationed two frigates between Martinique and Dominica, one to windward of Point Salines, Martinique, and one between Antigua and Désirade.

May 6      On the 6th of May the Point Salines frigate ran in with the signal flying for an enemy fleet, and the whole squadron of nineteen sail of the line proceeded out in quest of de Guichen. The French Admiral had managed to refit his ships at Basseterre, and had once more embarked on his project of capturing St. Lucia.

May 10      Four days later the fleets came in sight of one another, the French fleet being twelve miles to windward and Point Salines bearing N.N.E. about fifteen miles. A period of manœuvring followed with de Guichen in the windward position and able to force action at his own appointed time. The handling of the French fleet called forth the admiration of their enemy, and they

had evidently attained a high state of efficiency at keeping station and turning together, but de Guichen did not take advantage of his superiority in numbers and position. 1780

‘Nothing could induce them to risque a general action tho’ it was in their power daily,’ wrote Rodney: ‘they made at different times motions which indicated a desire of engaging but their resolution fail’d them when they drew near and as they sail’d far better than His Majesty’s Fleet, they with ease could gain what distance they pleased to windward.’<sup>1</sup>

On the 12th de Guichen ran down towards the British fleet, May 12 but hauled to the wind again before arriving at gun range. During this manœuvre Rodney shifted his flag to the *Venus*, 36-gun frigate, thus repeating Howe’s action when manœuvring for position opposite d’Estaing.

De Guichen repeated his tantalising manœuvre several times during the next two days, but never came near enough for fire to be opened.

Rodney then attempted a feint and, about noon on the 15th, May 15 he ordered his ships to crowd sail to give the impression that he was going to retreat. De Guichen ‘had the vanity to think’ he was retreating and Rodney ‘suffered him to enjoy the deception.’<sup>1</sup> But, just as his ships were coming within long-gun range, the wind suddenly veered and the British ships were forced round to a south-westerly course. According to Rodney’s flag-captain, the French fleet came down ‘when their men had got their wine,’ and the British ships did not make full sail till the French fleet were close, whilst the signal for the van to tack was bent on ready to hoist at the right moment. This was a well-thought-out manœuvre, which, if the wind had not changed, would have enabled the British to obtain the weather position.

However, the fortuitous change of wind gave Rodney the windward position, and he was quick to profit by it. The signal for the van to tack was at once hoisted, and Rowley’s ships led round to an easterly course. (Diagram No. 11.) De Guichen at once replied by wearing round and steering on the same course in line abreast. Rodney was now in the coveted position and

<sup>1</sup> Rodney’s Despatch, ‘*Sandwich*, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, May 31, 1780.’



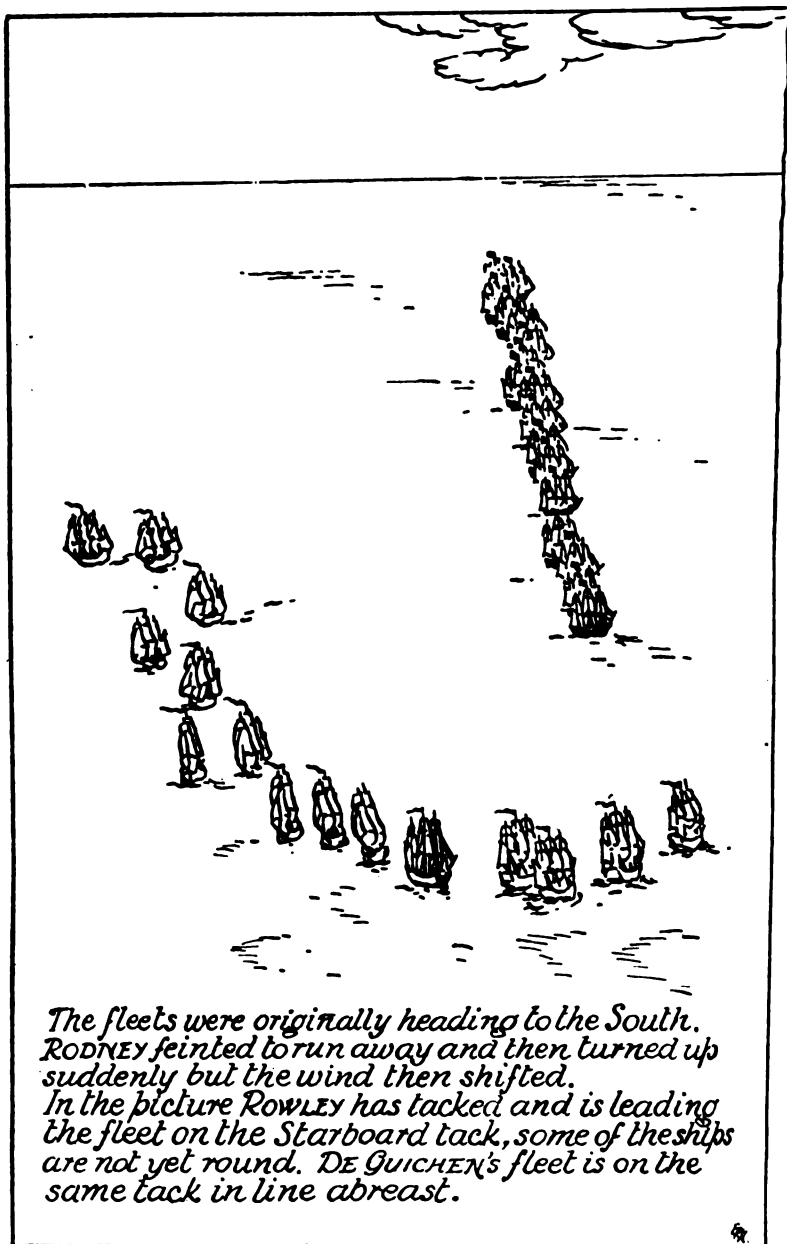


DIAGRAM 11.—BATTLE OF ST. LUCIA CHANNEL, MAY 15TH, 1780, SHORTLY AFTER NOON.

could force battle, but the wind suddenly backed to the east again and his opponent once more controlled the situation. 1780

De Guichen at once tacked. Simultaneously the British van ship led round to the north-east. These movements resulted in the two fleets converging with the French van rapidly passing across the leading British ship. (Diagram No. 12.)

De Guichen did not shorten sail and the *Albion* 'commanded by that good and gallant officer Captain Bowyer'<sup>1</sup> struck the French line about its centre. The relative positions of the two fleets and the courses they were steering prevented any possibility of a general engagement, and the ships were soon clear of one another. The *Albion*, in Young's words, 'sustained the fire of fifteen of the enemy's ships' and was badly damaged; the *Conqueror*, Rowley's flagship, and the *Magnificent* also received heavy punishment. The total British loss being 21 killed and 100 wounded.

Both fleets spent the next three days in cautious manœuvring, the French 'keeping an awful distance';<sup>1</sup> but on the 19th, when they were on opposite tacks, a shift of wind enabled Commodore Hotham in the van ship to lead up to the enemy's rear. But de Guichen was not seeking close action, and after a warm interchange of broadsides he hugged the wind and broke off the engagement. The *Albion* and *Conqueror* again bore the brunt of the fighting, and the *Vengeance*, Hotham's ship, was considerably damaged. The total British loss was 47 killed and 118 wounded. May 19

The rival fleets were now 120 miles to windward of Martinique, but neither was in a serviceable condition. The French ships were running short of provisions, and, of the British fleet, the *Conqueror* and the *Boyne* were leaking badly, and the *Cornwall* was unfit to take her place in the line.

Rodney and de Guichen each claimed that his opponent was the first to leave the battle area.

On the morning of the 21st the French fleet was eighteen miles to windward with all sail set, and, the weather being hazy, was soon lost to view. Rodney then set sail for Barbados and anchored there on the 22nd. The *Cornwall*, *Boyne* and *Conqueror* May 21 May 22

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, May 31, 1780.'

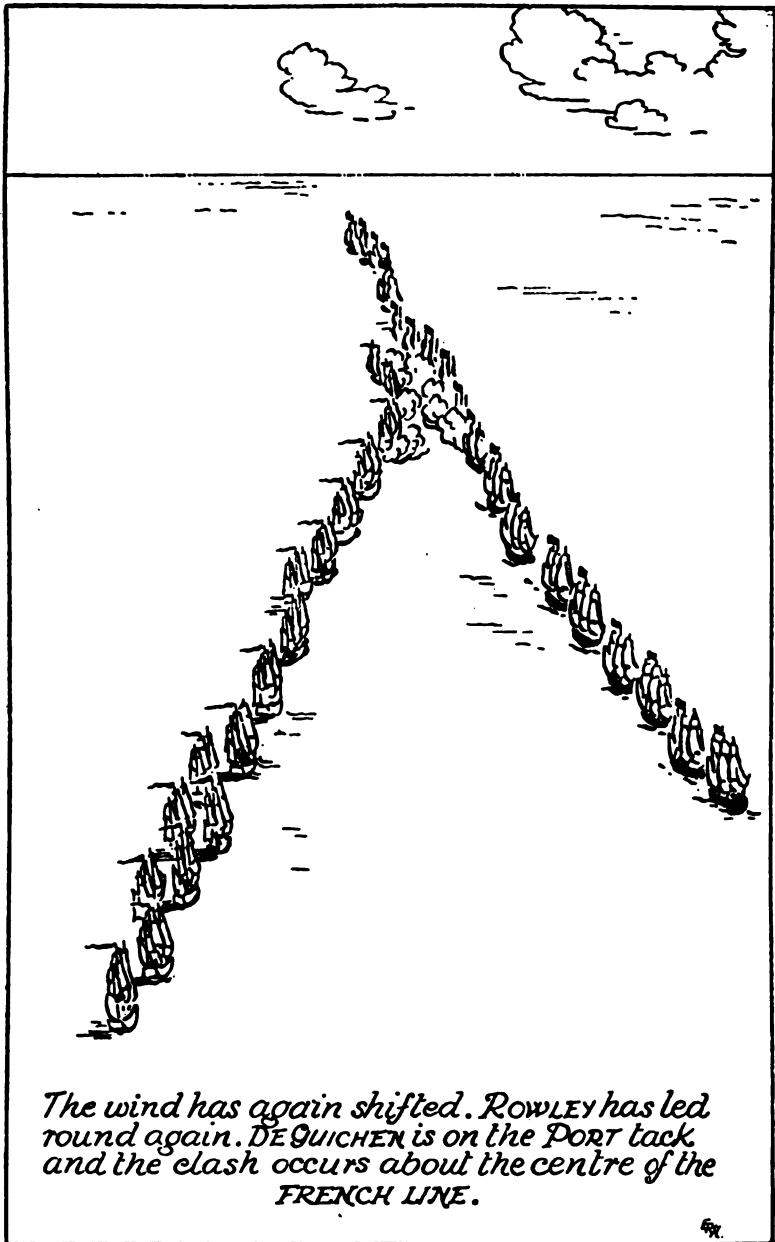


DIAGRAM 12.—BATTLE OF ST. LUCIA CHANNEL, MAY 15TH, 1780, 2 P.M.

ran before the wind and eventually arrived at Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia. De Guichen reached his base at Fort Royal also on the 22nd. 1780

In this second encounter between these two skilled Admirals both could claim partial success.

Rodney's object was to prevent de Guichen carrying out his project of conquest and in this he succeeded. On the other hand de Guichen had sailed away with a nearly intact fleet and would probably soon be threatening the coveted islands again. De Guichen had won a momentary advantage as several of his opponent's ships were crippled and he had carried out his orders from home. But his own ships had not entirely escaped damage, and it was some little time before they were fit to take their place in the line.

He lost a son in one of the engagements. This bereavement, added to the strain of commanding a big fleet, caused a breakdown and he requested to be relieved. 'The command of so large a fleet,' he wrote, 'is infinitely beyond my capacity in all respects.'<sup>1</sup> Rodney, on the other hand, though a martyr to gout, wrote to his wife that the long period of manœuvring and fighting had done him good.

It was unfortunate that a reinforcing squadron under Commodore Walsingham<sup>2</sup> and ships ordered to join from North America did not arrive before the fighting, as Rodney was slightly inferior in numbers to his opponent throughout the operations. This was not due to any fault of the Home Authorities. Walsingham's squadron sailed from England in ample time but experienced continuous adverse winds. The orders for the North American ships were not delivered in time, owing to the negligence of a frigate Captain.

Rodney was satisfied with the conduct of his subordinates in the operations that lasted from the 6th to the 22nd of May. 'As I had given public notice to all my captains that I expected implicit obedience to every signal made under the certain penalty of being instantly superseded, it had an admirable effect as they

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix XII.

1780 were all convinced after their late gross behaviour that they had nothing to expect at my hands but instant punishment to those who neglected their duty. My eye on them had more dread than the enemy's fire and they knew it would be fatal. No regard was paid to rank: Admirals as well as Captains, if out of their station, were instantly reprimanded by signals or messages sent by frigate; and, in spite of themselves I taught them to be what they had never been before—Officers, and showed them that an inferior fleet, properly conducted, was more than a match for one far superior.’<sup>1</sup> The desired end may have been obtained, but it is hard to believe that the veteran officers of his fleet were so inefficient or such cowards that only fear of immediate punishment, and perhaps death, compelled them to do their duty, and handle their ships properly in the face of the enemy. There was still no mutual confidence and understanding, and for that reason the British fleet under Rodney was not a perfectly efficient fighting machine. The limitations imposed by this state of affairs may not have come to light during the two actions, but they might well have caused defeat if de Guichen had been more enterprising.

Rodney told his officers that he would shift his flag to a frigate if necessary to watch them and we have seen that he carried out his intention when the fleet were manœuvring for position on the 12th. His Flag Captain did not approve. ‘When the French fleet came down on us the first time he left me in a confused state and, in short, I did not know he was out of the ship. I did by no means approve of his going into the *Venus*, and he at that time proposed my going with him; but as the enemy was so near at hand, appearances would have been against me, and I was afraid of the censure of the world to have quitted the *Sandwich* at that time. His being in the frigate was of no service as he always kept to leeward of the line. The enemy being to windward he could never be a judge of it: but at last I got him persuaded to keep between us, which he attended to in the last rencounter.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Lady Rodney, ‘Barbadoes, May 27, 1780’ (Mundy’s *Life of Lord Rodney*).

<sup>2</sup> Young to Middleton, ‘Barbadoes, June 3, 1780’ (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

Shortly after the British fleet had dropped anchor in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, a frigate ran in with the startling news that she had sighted a large Spanish fleet off Cadiz on the 2nd of May. She had followed for several days, and, as soon as it was evident that the enemy intended to cross the Atlantic, had crowded on sail to give early warning to the Admiral. Rodney at once ordered the fleet to water and refit with the utmost despatch. 1780

A few days later a sloop arrived from Lisbon with similar intelligence, and she was followed by a sloop from England with more detailed information. The fleet, which would shortly join de Guichen, consisted of twelve ships of the line, five frigates and eighty-three transports, carrying 11,400 men under the command of Admiral Josef Solano.

Rodney at once sent out frigates to windward of the islands, and followed with the whole fleet on the 9th of June, though he was of opinion that 'without a reinforcement from England nothing of great importance can be undertaken or expected.'<sup>1</sup> But Don Solano, having sighted a British frigate, altered course and passed to the north of Guadeloupe, where he was joined by de Guichen on the 10th. He thus evaded Rodney, who was lying in wait to windward of Martinique. June 9

As soon as Rodney knew definitely that the Spanish fleet had passed to the north of him, he bore away to blockade Fort Royal, as he was convinced that de Guichen intended to effect a junction with Solano; but he arrived off the harbour to find all but six ships had sailed two days before. He at once despatched frigates to find the French fleet, and they soon brought him news of a fleet of seventeen sail of the line to leeward of Dominica. A move to leeward would have 'allowed the six of the line in Fort Royal and that enterprising General, the Marquis de Bouillé, to attack St. Lucia or Barbadoes,'<sup>2</sup> or the six ships to join de Guichen, so he determined to continue the blockade.

On the 16th a frigate reported that she had sighted a combined fleet of twenty-four sail of the line, and Rodney repaired to Gros Inlet Bay to hasten the refit of the ships there, 'as every line of June 16

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, May 31, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, St. Lucia, June 21, 1780.'

1780 battle ship was of the greatest consequence at this critical moment,' and to put the island in a proper state of defence.<sup>1</sup>

June 19 After junction. the Allied fleet dropped anchor in Prince Rupert's Bay, Dominica, where the Spaniards wooded, watered, and landed their sick. On the 19th the men-of-war sailed down to Fort Royal, and the transports shaped course for Havana.

Rodney was thus faced with a much superior force, judged by numbers. The Allied fleet could place twenty-seven effective ships in the line to his eighteen. But their strength was only on paper. Sickness and fevers were rife amongst the Spanish crews, and many of their ships were consequently in no condition to fight.

Rodney could not know this, and was more than ever anxious for news of the promised reinforcements. Until Walsingham arrived he could not possibly take the offensive. He also stopped all convoy sailings as it was not in his power 'to secure them from insult in these seas.'<sup>1</sup>

June 17 On the 17th a line of battle ship of the North American squadron joined, and he then learnt that Arbuthnot only received orders to send him a reinforcement on the 16th of March. The frigate carrying the important despatch had lost one of her masts on passage, and her Captain, oblivious of the urgency of his mission, had put into the island of Providence and remained there for several months. Rodney was naturally exasperated at this inexcusable dereliction of duty. 'I must beg Their Lordships will permit me with all humility to make this Public Declaration that the wisdom of the measure was so conspicuous, and Their Lordships' intention so plain of making His Majesty's fleet superior in these seas, that I may venture to affirm that had their orders been obeyed it would have been attended with the most glorious success to His Majesty's arms and in all probability fatal to the naval power of his enemies.'<sup>1</sup>

On the 28th he called a Council-of-War to determine what was to be done with the trade. It was decided that the trade should sail, using the dark hours for portions of the voyage, and should not call at St. Kitts.

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, St. Lucia, June 21, 1780.'

On the 1st of July Rodney received intelligence that the enemy intended to decoy him away by a feint against the Northern Islands and then fall on St. Lucia. 1780  
July 1

But the Spaniards had no such warlike intentions, and de Guichen soon found that an attack on the British islands, which had been his intention when reinforced, was out of the question. Don Solano flatly refused to join in any operations, but, instead, insisted on being accompanied part of the way to Havana.

De Guichen, who had orders to leave the station before the hurricane season, fell in with his colleague's wishes, and the combined fleet sailed on the night of the 5th of July without showing lights or making signals.

Rodney ordered out six frigates to watch the enemy's motions, but they did not succeed in bringing him the information he required. A French vessel was taken and letters found indicating that twelve of the line were to go to North America, four to Cap François, two to remain at Fort Royal, and the remainder to escort the trade home.

This proved to be false intelligence, for de Guichen, after escorting the Spaniards to the east end of Cuba, sailed up to Cap François. There he received letters from Lafayette and the French Minister to the United States imploring him to operate in North American waters.

To fall in with their proposal entailed disregard of his orders from home, and he was not the man to take such a heavy responsibility. He sailed for Europe on the 16th of August, and arrived at Cadiz on the 24th of October with a convoy of ninety-five merchant ships laden with West Indian produce. He left ten of the line at Cap François. Aug. 16

Owing to the failure of his frigates, Rodney knew nothing of these movements.

On the 12th of July Commodore Walsingham arrived with the long overdue reinforcement of five ships of the line. July 12

The enemy having disappeared to leeward, Rodney was able to turn his attention to the sailing and protection of the trade. He gave Hotham six of the line and twenty smaller vessels, with orders to take over the command of the Windward Islands station



1780 with St. Lucia as base. Rowley and Walsingham were given ten of the line to escort the trade and troop transports to Jamaica, and to escort the trade from there home when Sir Peter Parker considered it desirable. He himself took command of the remainder to escort the trade to St. Kitts, and there see off the great August homeward-bound convoy, which was collecting from the various islands. Two of the badly damaged ships of the line escorted home the August convoy and the other damaged ships went with the October convoy.

With the approach of the hurricane season fresh dispositions had to be made. The false intelligence contained in the captured letters pointed to the desirability of reinforcing Arbuthnot, and when Rodney learnt from an American ship that a French squadron of seven of the line and a number of troop transports had arrived at Narragansett Bay on the 12th of July, he no longer hesitated. 'As it plainly appeared to me that His Majesty's Territories, Fleet and Army in America were in imminent danger of being overpower'd by the superior force of the Public Enemy, it was incumbent on me to forego any emoluments that might have accrued to myself by the enterprise intended by General Vaughan and myself during the Hurricane months on the Spanish Main. Therefore, without a moment's hesitation I flew with all despatch.'<sup>1</sup> He set sail for the North American coast and

Sept. 14 arrived at New York with ten of the line on the 14th of September.

Whilst the big fleets were operating round the Windward Islands, two actions of some interest were fought on the Leeward Islands station. Captain William Cornwallis, known as 'Billy Blue,' was cruising off Monte Christi in command of three small ships of the line on the 20th of March when he sighted four French sail of the line escorting a convoy. It was La Motte-Picquet on his way from Martinique to Cap François. Picquet at once ordered the merchant ships to make for Cap François and signalled to the men-of-war to chase after Cornwallis. The fleets met about 5 P.M. and a running fight ensued, which continued all through the night. Next morning there was a dead calm, and as the *Janus* was receiving heavy punishment, Collingwood ordered

Mar. 20

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, Sandy Hook, September 15, 1780.'

the *Bristol* and *Lion* to get their boats out and be towed to her support. A general cannonading then took place for two or three hours, after which the ships separated to repair their damage. 1780

Shortly after daylight on the 22nd a British '54' and two frigates hove in sight and it was Cornwallis's turn to chase Picquet which he did for five hours without coming up with him. Mar. 22

Picquet was a gallant and efficient officer, but, like his seniors, he was severely handicapped by his orders from home, which enjoined special care against losing any ships.

On the 20th of June Cornwallis was again cruising off Monte Christi with four ships of the line, when he received a signal from his frigate cruising ahead that four strange sail were in sight to the north-east. He immediately made the signal to chase, and was soon able to make out the strangers as seven ships of the line escorting a convoy. It was a squadron under Commodore de Ternay. June 20

The wind was south-east and de Ternay's squadron was to windward of the convoy. Cornwallis formed up on the star-board tack and, before long, the French squadron was seen to be sailing down to attack.

Unfortunately, one of the British squadron, the *Ruby*, had dropped to leeward and, as the French would cut her off if they held their course, Cornwallis wore round to go to her support. The *Ruby* seeing her predicament went about and steered to the south-west and the French ships chased after her.

But instead of continuing the pursuit which would have resulted in one of two things, either the cutting off of one ship or a fight with Cornwallis's inferior force, de Ternay began to edge away and the *Ruby* was able to join her consorts. Cornwallis then tacked to an easterly course, de Ternay following suit, and some long-range firing took place with very little result. (Diagram No. 13.)

De Ternay was severely criticised for his cautious behaviour, but his principal object was to get his convoy with 6,000 troops safely into Narragansett Bay and the criticism was ill-founded. Cornwallis proved himself on this occasion, as he did in later life, a courageous and skilful squadron leader.

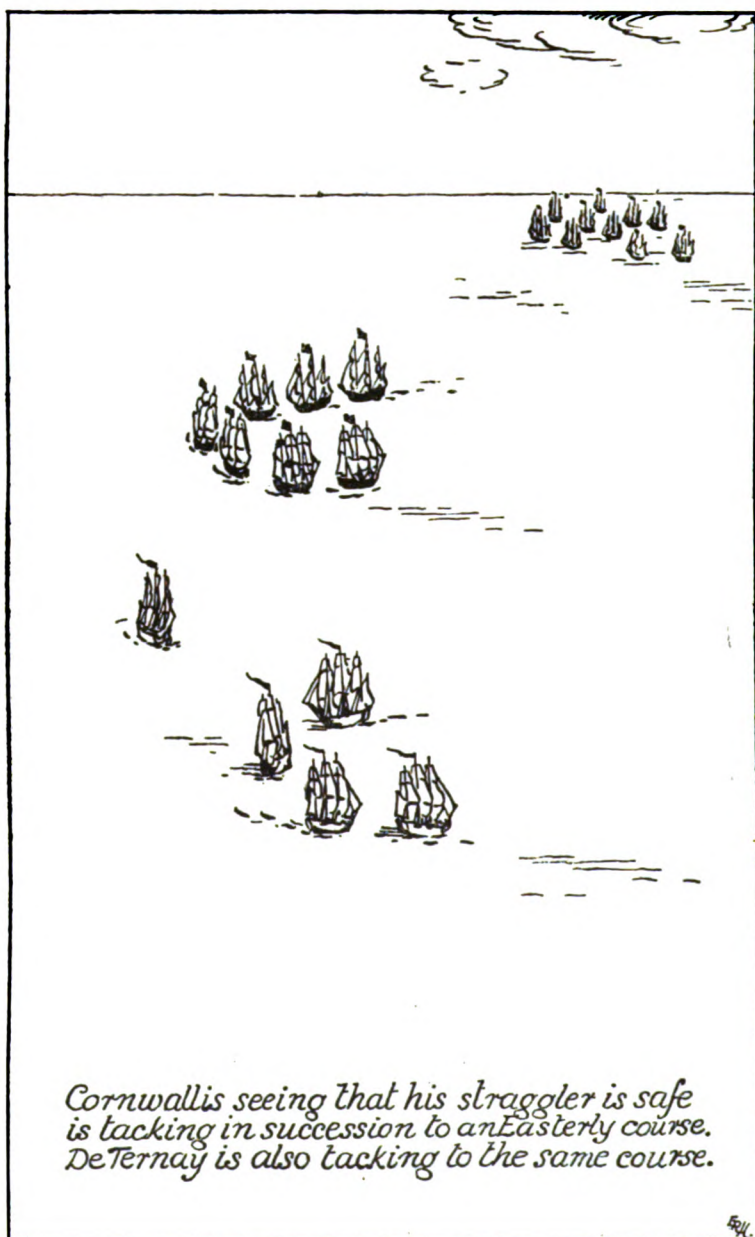


DIAGRAM 13.—BATTLE OF MONTE CHRISTI, JUNE 29TH, 1780.

In October a great hurricane swept across the West Indies and a number of men-of-war were lost or severely damaged. The list is of interest. 1780 Oct.

<i>Grafton</i>	74	} Of Rowley's squadron, all dismasted.
<i>Hector</i>	74	
<i>Ruby</i>	64	
<i>Trident</i>	64	
<i>Bristol</i>	50	
<i>Berwick</i>	74	Of Rowley's squadron, dismasted and had to bear away to England.
<i>Thunderer</i>	74	Walsingham's ship—foundered.
<i>Stirling Castle</i>	64	Of Rowley's squadron, struck on Silver Keys, Hispanola and foundered.
<i>Phoenix</i>	44	Wrecked on Cuba.
<i>Ulysses</i>	44	} Dismasted.
<i>Pomona</i>	28	
<i>Scarborough</i>	24	
<i>Victor</i>	14	} Foundered.
<i>Barbadoes</i>	14	
<i>Blanche</i>	82	
<i>Chameleon</i>	14	
<i>Andromeda</i>	28	} Wrecked on Martinique.
<i>Laurel</i>	28	
<i>Beaver's Prize</i>	18	Wrecked on St. Lucia.
<i>Deal Castle</i>	24	Wrecked on Porto Rico.
<i>Egmont</i>	74	} Dismasted and obliged to run to Jamaica.
<i>Endymion</i>	44	
<i>Vengeance</i>	74	} Greatly damaged at St. Lucia.
<i>Ajax</i>	74	
<i>Montagu</i>	74	

The third phase thus came to an end with a battle against a much more powerful enemy than the fleets of France and Spain. Throughout this phase the French were superior in numbers to the British but, to the credit of the Home authorities, it must be remembered that the North American ships failed to concentrate, and also that the reinforcement under Walsingham

1780 left England early enough and, had normal weather conditions prevailed, in ample time to arrive at St. Lucia before operations commenced.

Rodney had succeeded in countering de Guichen's offensive operations but had not inflicted any permanent damage on the French fleet. What would have been a remarkably interesting battle, in view of the new tactical idea of concentrating on the rear, never materialised for the reasons described.

De Guichen throughout the operations appears to have been mostly concerned with keeping his fleet in good order. In his Chief of the Staff's report such phrases as 'The King's squadron was again in very good order' occur frequently. He had the windward position continuously after the first battle and could have forced action at his own time, but probably owing to the restrictions placed on him by his Home Government, he showed no determination to come to close grips with the smaller fleet that stood between him and his objectives. Thus once more we see a French Admiral satisfied that he had 'done enough' when he had accomplished nothing but a safe return to his base after slightly damaging his enemy. 'Lack of water made me desire a favourable opportunity to enter Fort Royal,' he wrote, 'and as I considered that I had done everything possible for the Flag and for the glory of the King's arms and having lost sight of the enemy I steered a course for that harbour anchoring there with the whole squadron on the 22nd day of May.'<sup>1</sup>

The French and Spanish Fleets suffered terribly from epidemics and sickness. By the time Don Solano arrived at Havana he had lost nearly 5,000 men, and the blame for this can only be attributed to Spanish naval officers ashore and afloat who, from previous campaigns in the West Indies, should have realised the necessity for cleanliness and proper medical equipment.

We can imagine de Guichen's disgust when the epidemic spread to his own crews. He had already suffered severe disappointment when his newly arrived colleague flatly refused to assist in any operations against the enemy. In this refusal we see a very good example of the inherent difficulties of Allies

<sup>1</sup> De Guichen's letter to the Minister, May 28, 1780. Quoted by Castex.

working together in war, when they have never planned and worked together in peace time. 1780

Rodney, on the other hand, was handicapped throughout the operations by the lack of a properly equipped dockyard. This comes out clearly in Young's letters, one of which has already been quoted. From Gros Islet Bay he wrote to Middleton, 'Our wants become numerous in the naval line; sails, cordage, masts, yards, and anchors—many of the latter have been lost by negligence and inattention.'<sup>1</sup> Again, referring to the French custom of shooting high, 'There is no occasion for my describing to you the bad consequences of those irregular attacks: cordage, sails, masts and men must suffer: I therefore hope you will provide accordingly. Stores of most kinds are wanted.'<sup>2</sup>

Before Rodney sailed for New York, the new signal books compiled by Kempenfelt arrived, and the poor state of signalling in the fleet is evident from another of Young's letters. 'Indeed I ask to see every captain in the Navy who commands a line of battle ship to have a complete set of flags and to repeat the signal through the line as the French do; and I wish most sincerely that an established code of signals were adopted for the use of His Majesty's Fleet.'<sup>3</sup> But when he gave them to Rodney he 'was apprehensive those are books he will pay little attention to.'<sup>3</sup>

His fears were probably well founded, for the senior naval officers of the day did not take readily to innovations. Kempenfelt himself experienced great difficulty in persuading the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel fleet to adopt the new book.

One day, when an enemy had been reported, signals were being made, and Geary, growing impatient, said to his Chief of Staff, 'Now, my dear Kempy, do, for God's sake, do, my dear Kempy, oblige by throwing your signals overboard and make that which we all understand, "Bring the enemy to close action."'

This attitude is all the more surprising as Rodney had more

<sup>1</sup> Young to Middleton, '*Princess Royal*, Gros Islet Bay, June 28, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> Young to Middleton, '*Sandwich*, Barbadoes, June 3, 1780.'

<sup>3</sup> Young to Middleton, '*Princess Royal*, Basseterre, St. Kitts, July 24, 1780' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

1780 than once found the signal table inadequate, and Geary must have known of Keppel's difficulties at the Battle of Ushant. But it is possible that Rodney feared that a more elaborate signal table would lead to more signalling, which, in turn, would tend to rob captains and junior flag officers of their initiative, and he could certainly have supported such an argument by pointing to the conduct of French captains in battle.

None the less, though the most famous fleet commanders of the sailing era believed in making their thoughts and wishes so familiar to the personnel that signals were reduced to a minimum, there were occasions, more particularly during the approach, when a comprehensive signal table was of the greatest value.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONJOINT OPERATIONS IN NORTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA, 1780

WE have seen that, as soon as d'Estaing's fleet was clear of the coast, Clinton and Arbuthnot commenced preparations for an expedition against Charleston,<sup>1</sup> in the belief that the Southern area, with its larger proportion of loyalist inhabitants, was the most profitable field of operations. 1780

It was decided to adopt a defensive attitude at New York and place the troops there under the command of Knyphausen.

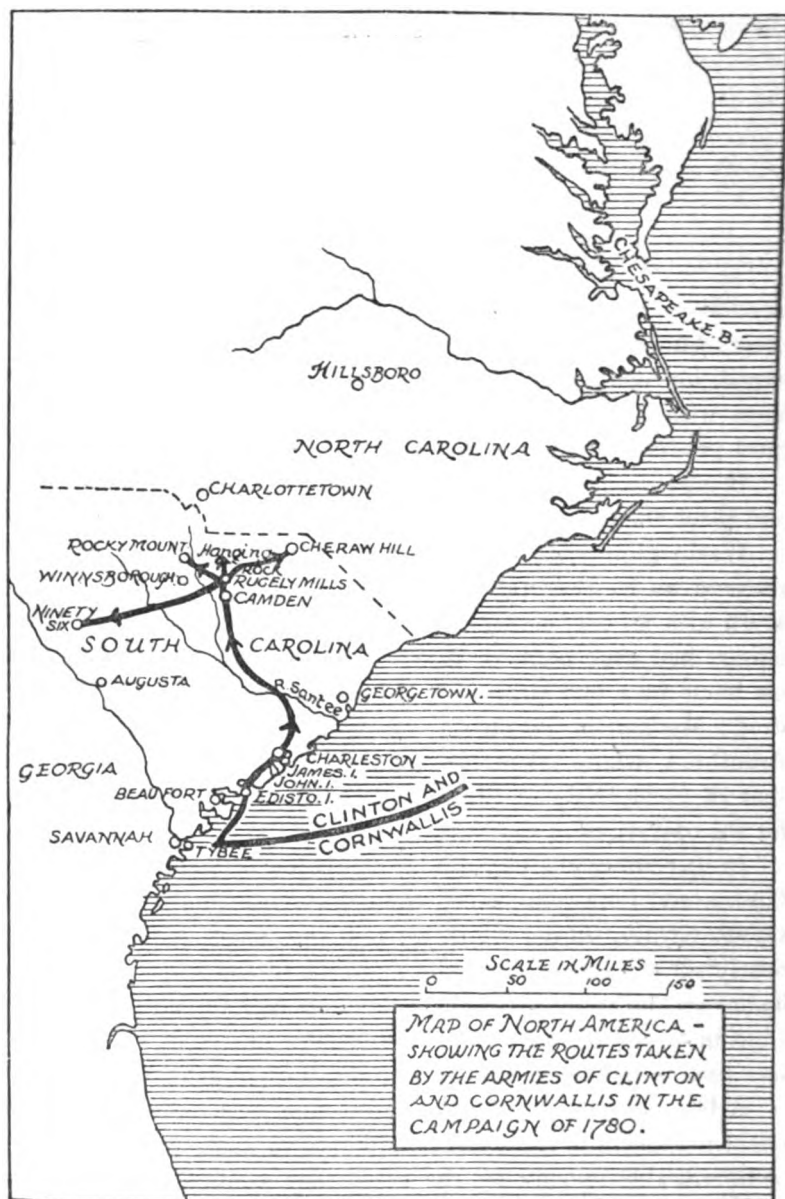
Washington was still in the highlands but, from intelligence received as to the state of his army, Clinton was able to sail south with an easy conscience. Unfortunately many of the best officers had gone home or died. Vaughan and Grey had sailed for home in a bad state of health; Campbell of Savannah was dead; Maclean of Penobscot was dying; and Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot, whose talent for command was certainly inferior to that of Lord Howe or Sir George Collier, was now responsible for the operations of the Navy.

In December the expedition, consisting of 7,600 men under Clinton and Cornwallis, sailed from New York, and, after a boisterous voyage, during which an ordnance vessel foundered and nearly all the horses died, the majority of the ships arrived at Tybee on the 1st of February. Congress had appointed General Lincoln to the command of the Southern provinces and he had had time to put Charleston in a proper state of defence. 1780 Feb. 1

Arbuthnot established a blockade as soon as he arrived and this enabled Lincoln to rouse the inhabitants to assist in the defence as he was able to convince them that they would lose everything they possessed if they attempted to evacuate their goods by water.

<sup>1</sup> See Map III.





MAP XIII.

Whilst waiting for the missing transports to arrive, Clinton went to Savannah to collect intelligence and arrange with General Paterson, who commanded there, to march across country to assist him in his operations. He returned to Tybee on the 9th of February, and on the 10th the fleet weighed and proceeded to the Edisto River. The next forty-eight hours were occupied in landing the army on John Island. 1780  
Feb. 9

Clinton called on Arbuthnot to assist him with guns from the ships, and forty-five cannon were hoisted out of the two-decked ships. The shortage of army guns was presumably due to the foundering of the ordnance vessel whose cargo was mainly cannon. A large part of the naval personnel also co-operated with the troops. 'Five post captains, two masters and commanders with a proper proportion of lieutenants and petty officers and 750 seamen and marines have been employed in different departments.'<sup>1</sup>

The army commenced to cross over to James Island on the 24th and Clinton, moving forward slowly, eventually established himself on the southern bank of the Ashley River opposite Charleston. On the 6th of March Fort Johnston was occupied. Feb. 24  
Mar. 6

On the 8th Arbuthnot ordered the heavier line-of-battle ships to return to New York, and three of the smaller 44-gun ships to hoist out guns and stores, in order that they could be taken over the bar. Mar. 8

The American Commodore, Whipple, had in the meantime anchored his squadron of one 44-gun ship and several frigates in a position to rake any ships attempting to enter, but on the 20th, when Arbuthnot's first ship began to enter the harbour, Whipple beat a hasty retreat and sank most of his ships to form an obstruction across the Cooper River. The obstruction was completed by chains to the shore and three frigates moored behind it. Mar. 20

Clinton now received the reinforcements from Georgia, and after moving up the river about twelve miles crossed over, and on the 1st of April broke ground within 800 yards of the enemy's works. April 1

<sup>1</sup> Arbuthnot to Germain, 'Roebuck, Charlestown, May 15, 1780' (H.M.C. Stopford Sackville MSS.).

1780 The task of transferring the army across the river was entrusted to Captains Elphinstone and Evans. It was well done. 'The whole army,' wrote the Admiral, 'with the Artillery and stores necessary for the siege were landed under cover of the gallies on the townside with astonishing expedition.'<sup>1</sup>

April 9 As a consequence the batteries were ready to open against the town on the 9th, and, at one o'clock on that day, Arbuthnot ordered his squadron of three line-of-battle ships and three frigates to weigh and proceed up harbour.

The little fleet ran past Fort Moultrie and the batteries on Sullivan Island and anchored off James Island, thus cutting off the enemy's communications to the south. The ships anchored within range of the enemy's heavier guns and the *Roebuck* was hit six times. But Sir Andrew Hamond, her Captain, ordered no notice to be taken, and the enemy ceased fire as they thought she was out of range. The only line of communication with the country now left to the enemy was to the north.

April 10 On the 10th Clinton and Arbuthnot summoned Lincoln to surrender, but received a reply that the town would be defended to the last extremity. Orders were then given to the batteries to open fire.

Lincoln, sensible that his cavalry could be of little assistance in the town, had ordered them to keep open the line of communications to the north. Clinton accordingly detached Colonel Tarleton with a body of cavalry to deal with this force and, as a result of a surprise night attack, the force was dispersed and a number of prisoners and horses taken.

April 18 On the 18th a reinforcement of infantry arrived from New York, and by the 23rd the British commenced their final works

April 29 within 150 yards of the enemy's lines. On the 29th Arbuthnot landed a brigade of 500 seamen and captured Mount Pleasant and Lamprière's Point. He then organised an operation against Fort Moultrie.

May 4 Two hundred seamen, under Captain Hudson and Gambier, embarked in boats late on the night of the 4th of May, and landed undetected to the east of the fort. Another 200 men were

Arbuthnot's Despatch, '*Roebuck*, off Charlestown, May 14, 1780.'

embarked in boats ready to reinforce, and the ships had orders to weigh and attack as soon as the tide served ; but they were not required, as the garrison, seeing their position to be hopeless surrendered to Hudson. 1780

By the 6th Cornwallis had made himself master of the surrounding country, the remnant of Lincoln's cavalry had been routed, Fort Moultrie had fallen, and the British third parallel was completed. As a result of these operations Clinton and Arbuthnot again sent a summons to Lincoln, but he was not yet in a mood to surrender. When, however, a close-range bombardment resulted in the fall of the outer works, and Lincoln saw his enemy was preparing for a general assault, he informed Clinton by letter that he was prepared to agree to the British terms. May 6 May 8

Both Clinton and Arbuthnot in their despatches spoke warmly of the hearty co-operation between the services. 'The fleet,' wrote Arbuthnot, 'has endeavoured most heartily and effectually to co-operate with the Army in every possible instance and the most perfect harmony has subsisted between us.'<sup>1</sup> Though Arbuthnot was able to work amicably with Clinton in these early operations, it will be seen later that this happy state of affairs soon came to an end under the strain of war.

Sir Andrew Hamond was specially mentioned in the despatch. 'The conduct of Sir Andrew Hamond of the *Roebuck* who bears this despatch to you deserves particular mention, whether in the great line of service or in the detail of duty he has been ready, forward and animated.'<sup>1</sup>

Clinton now decided to return north and leave Cornwallis in command in the south, as he had received intelligence that a French fleet, escorting troop transports, was on its way to the American coast. On the 5th of June he sailed with Arbuthnot for New York taking a part of the army with him. Before leaving, he issued a proclamation calling on the country people to return to their allegiance, and arranged the future operations with Cornwallis. These were to consist of an advance into the interior in three columns, with Ninety Six and Augusta as objectives. June 5

On the 18th of May, Cornwallis set out with 2,500 men May 18

<sup>1</sup> Arbuthnot's Despatch, 'Roebuck off Charlestown, May 14, 1780.'

1780 intending to march by the north bank of the Santee River to  
May 27 Camden. On the 27th, hearing that an American infantry regiment was retreating before him, he ordered Colonel Tarleton to go in pursuit. The pursuit continued as far as Rugeley Mills where the Americans turned to face their pursuers. Tarleton ordered his dragoons to charge and the enemy were completely broken up and over a hundred killed and 200 taken prisoners. This mobile British force had marched 105 miles in fifty-four hours, a most remarkable performance.

Tarleton's success practically cleared South Carolina of enemy forces, and Cornwallis, who arrived at Camden shortly afterwards, was able to turn his attention to establishing order throughout the district. It was a difficult task. The loyalists, who had been unfortunately placed after the British failure to take Charleston in 1776, were once more able to breathe freely and come out into the open, but it was natural that bitter feeling existed between them and the revolutionaries.

From his small army of 4,000 men Cornwallis found garrisons for his four sea bases—Savannah, Beaufort, Charleston, Georgetown—and for the military points at Augusta, Ninety Six, Camden, Rocky Mount, Hanging Rock and Cheraw Hill. He then returned to Charleston to prepare for future operations, but before long news of fresh enemy activity reached him. Two thousand men from Washington's army were reported at Hillsborough in North Carolina and, worse still, the revolutionaries, who had been well treated, were reported to be forming themselves into bands for guerilla warfare. A Virginian, Thomas Sumter, who had served with the British Army in the Seven Years' War, commanded the band that took the offensive first, and, in July, he compelled Lord Rawdon to evacuate the Cheraw Hill post. He then attacked the posts at Rocky Mount and Hanging Rock but was beaten off.

In the meantime Congress had appointed General Gates, the same who compelled Burgoyne to surrender, to command in the south, and Cornwallis had no doubt that Camden would be his first objective.

The alternatives for the British force were either to embark

on an offensive in North Carolina or withdraw from the advanced posts and concentrate at Charleston. 1780

Cornwallis, true to his forcible character, took the more enterprising course and, as there was just a possibility that active operations by Clinton in the north might draw off Gates, wrote to his Commander-in-Chief begging that he would assist by a diversion on the Chesapeake coast.

Gates set out from Hillsborough on the 27th of July and arrived at a position fifteen miles north-east of Camden on the 10th of August. He then moved slowly west to Rugeley Mills. Rawdon in the meanwhile concentrated the small garrisons of the military posts at Camden, where Cornwallis arrived on the 14th, and the latter could have ordered a retreat to Charleston and sacrificed his sick and stores but he was determined to fight. His force consisted of 1,500 regulars and 500 militia, whilst Gates could place in the field 1,500 regulars and about 1,500 militia. On the night of the 15th Cornwallis advanced to the north and at the same time Gates began to move to the south, with the result that the advanced guards met at two in the morning. The battle commenced with an American attack on the British right, but the movement was badly executed by the half-trained militia and a counterattack was launched which resulted in their complete rout.

The regular troops in the centre of each line fought one another with great obstinacy for three-quarters of an hour, and the issue was still in doubt when the British cavalry, who had worked round the enemy's flank, suddenly charged them in the rear. This unexpected attack, coupled with the complete failure of the militia was more than Gates's men could stand and they broke and fled, pursued and harassed by the cavalry. The American losses were 1,000 killed and wounded and 1,000 prisoners; the British losses were 324 killed and wounded.

Sumter who had been detached by Gates to operate against the British lines of communication was still at large, so Cornwallis sent off the indefatigable Tarleton to deal with him. He sighted Sumter's camp fires near Rocky Mount Ferry, but on crossing the river found his quarry had moved off. He then selected

1780 100 mounted men and sixty infantry and started off in pursuit. His perseverance was soon rewarded, for he shortly afterwards completely surprised Sumter and his eight hundred men resting in camp.

Sept. 7  
Sept. 22 These early successes convinced Cornwallis that the moment was opportune for an advance into North Carolina, though he had a great deal of sickness amongst his men and the guerilla bands were known to be numerous. Accordingly he struck camp on the 7th of September and reached Charlottetown on the 22nd after a difficult march.

Oct. 6 In the meantime a detachment under Major Ferguson, who had been sent to the district round Ninety Six to raise recruits, had got into difficulties. A guerilla band having attacked Augusta, Ferguson endeavoured to cut them off but, when seventy miles away from the main army at Charlottetown, he suddenly found himself in the presence of a large body of backwoodsmen. All his messengers to Cornwallis were shot and on the 6th of October he took up a position at bay on a hill. The backwoodsmen, who were skilled marksmen, numbered about 3,000, and, though the small British force fought gallantly, it had no chance and surrendered when over 400 had fallen.

This disaster ruined all Cornwallis's hopes of offensive operations and he retreated to Winnsborough. There we must leave him for the moment, a disappointed and disillusioned man, and follow the fortunes of the Commanders further north.

Jan. 30 Knyphausen, who had been left in command at New York, was kept busy by the enemy during the early months of the year. Their activities compelled him to keep a careful lookout, and on the 30th of January he repelled an attack in force on Staten Island. He afterwards conducted some minor operations against enemy posts, and was at Elizabethtown when Clinton arrived from Charleston on the 17th of June.

June 17 Washington, who had experienced a most difficult time in keeping his army together during the winter, now received fresh encouragement as Lafayette, who had been on a flying visit to France, brought the welcome news that a French fleet and reinforcements were arriving shortly. This news also reached Clinton

about the same time and he immediately informed Arbuthnot 1780  
who ordered frigates out to watch for the enemy's fleet.

On the 8th of July one of the lookouts ran in with the news July 8  
that a French fleet had been sighted off Cape Henry on the 5th  
and, when last seen, were on a course for Rhode Island. On  
the 10th definite news was received that a French fleet of seven July 10  
of the line under De Ternay had anchored off Newport, Rhode  
Island,<sup>1</sup> and that 6,000 troops under the Comte de Rochambeau  
had been landed.

Arbuthnot had only four of the line at New York when the  
first report was received but, on the 18th, Rear-Admiral Thomas July 13  
Graves arrived with six of the line and the British fleet was then  
superior. Graves could have arrived much earlier if he had not  
wasted time in taking prizes and towing an East Indiaman.  
The desire for prize money was once more seriously affecting the  
course of events. Arbuthnot wrote that 'Graves's reinforcement  
arrived in a sickly state,' but volunteers were forthcoming to fill  
the vacancies, and the fleet put to sea and arrived off Rhode  
Island on the 22nd. A reconnaissance ascertained that De Ternay's July 22  
fleet was anchored in a defensive position across the harbour  
and that a number of guns were mounted on shore. It was a  
hard nut to crack and the two Commanders eventually decided  
to attempt a *coup de main*, but delays occurred and it was not  
until the 27th that Clinton was able to embark his troops. July 27

Washington was quick to take advantage of the situation,  
and before Clinton had gone far he received the alarming news  
that an American army of 15,000 men had appeared at Kings-  
bridge. The enterprise was at once abandoned. Clinton turned  
back to defend New York, whilst Arbuthnot disposed his ships  
to blockade the French fleet.

But Washington was not in a condition to attack. He was  
depressed at the lack of definite support from his ally, and it was  
at this time that he wrote to de Guichen begging him for assistance  
with the result already seen.

To add to his discomforture, Rodney arrived at New York  
on the 16th of September with his ten ships of the line, and all Sept. 16

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix XIV.



1780 hopes of weakening the British hold on the sea communications were gone. But the fighting strength of the British fleet was much weakened by unfortunate disagreements between Rodney and Arbuthnot. That these disagreements were of serious moment is evident from the many letters that passed between the two Admirals and the letters home. 'I am exceedingly sorry,' wrote Young, 'to inform you that Mr. Arbuthnot does not draw well with either his superior or any other officer. The loaves and fishes, in both departments, have occasioned much disappointment, and I am afraid this said prize money is, and will be, the bane of all public service.'<sup>1</sup> He then gives a lurid account of Arbuthnot's rascally secretary, Mr. Green, who, he states, forges, pilfers, steals from the seamen and is a thorough-paced scoundrel.

Arbuthnot was even more plain-spoken—'Your Lordship will form a just opinion of my sentiments of the presumptuous interference of Admiral Sir G. B. Rodney in my command from the accompanying extracts of my letters to the Secretary to the Admiralty, and I must entreat your Lordship to add your voice to the check it is necessary for the public service this officer should receive; because his spirit, inflamed by good fortune and unguarded by reason, drives at the subversion of all order and all discipline.'<sup>2</sup> Again later, 'All I can say is that Sir George Rodney displayed the most wonton unprecedented abuse of power that ever was exhibited, and stripped the storehouses of all the necessaries both of ships and men.'<sup>3</sup> To Rodney he wrote: 'How far, Sir, your conduct (similarly circumstanced as you are) is praiseworthy and proper, consequences must determine. Your partial interference in the conduct of the American War is certainly incompatible with principles of reason and precedents of service.'<sup>4</sup>

Rodney was always polite. 'I am sorry that my conduct has given you offence,' he wrote to Arbuthnot. 'None was

<sup>1</sup> Young to Middleton, 'Sandwich, New York, October 30, 1870' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> Arbuthnot to Germain, 'Royal Oak, October 29, 1780' (H.M.C. Stopford Sackville MSS.).

<sup>3</sup> Arbuthnot to Germain, 'New York, December 19, 1780.'

<sup>4</sup> Arbuthnot to Rodney, 'at sea, October 16, 1780.'

intended on my part. Every respect due to you as an officer and gentleman, my inclination as well as my duty led me to pay you in the strictest sense. If any designing men by their insinuations have led you to deviate from that good sense and politeness which Mr. Arbuthnot was always known to have, I am sorry for it. It was not inclination or choice that brought me to America ; it was the duty I owed my King and Country.'<sup>1</sup> And to the Admiralty :—' If in his answers to me his letters have not been penn'd with that cordiality which ought to pass between officers acting in the public service, I am sorry for him. They affect not me. I am ashamed to mention what appears to be the real cause, and from whence Mr. Arbuthnot's chagrine proceeds, but the proofs are so plain that Prize Money is the occasion, that I am under the necessity of transmitting them.'<sup>2</sup> 1780

Rodney was probably right in believing that prize money was the root of the trouble. He was Arbuthnot's senior by many years and responsible for the operations of the whole fleet after he arrived at New York.

It is obvious that Rodney was a difficult man to work with. It is also evident that Arbuthnot had not the right temperament for co-operating with senior officers of either service.

' Letters from Sir Henry Clinton,' wrote Eden, ' prove the absolute necessity of either removing him or sending a new Commander of the squadron without delay. He repeats again and again the necessity of having Commanders-in-Chief who have confidence in each other.'<sup>3</sup>

Clinton did not mince matters in his letters. ' Were I to name the many other instances, my Lord, that the service suffers from the arrangements which Admiral Arbuthnot makes, without consulting one, your Lordship would be fully convinced that it cannot go on with any prospect of advantage in the King's interest while we are acting together.'<sup>4</sup>

The policy of appointing more than one Commander-in-Chief

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Arbuthnot, ' *Sandwich* off New York, October 19, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, ' *Sandwich*, off New York, October 30, 1780.'

<sup>3</sup> Eden to Germain, ' October 4, 1780, Greenwich' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>4</sup> Clinton to Germain, ' New York, October 31, 1780.'

1780 in the western area of operations was not a success. Many difficulties would have been removed, and much more effected, if Rodney had been appointed in sole command of all naval forces in the West Atlantic. He could then have disposed his ships in the area according to circumstances.

We have seen that earlier in the year Rodney expected some of Arbuthnot's ships to reinforce him in the West Indies, but they never arrived as the ship carrying the despatches was driven by weather to the Bahamas. If Rodney had been Commander-in-Chief of the whole area regrettable incidents of this nature could not have occurred.

But even if the orders had arrived it is doubtful if Arbuthnot would have obeyed them. He had already told Clinton that he could not spare ships for a diversionary operation on the Chesapeake, which the General was most anxious to carry out to meet Cornwallis's urgent entreaties, and it will be seen later that he disobeyed similar orders the following year.

On arrival at New York, Rodney detached Drake with four of the line to reinforce Arbuthnot's blockading squadron, and himself went up harbour to confer with Clinton and propose a combined attack on Rhode Island. But after reading the correspondence between the General and Arbuthnot he 'found with concern that it was too late to attack Rhode Island as the enemy had had time to fortify it, and Sir Henry Clinton had not sufficient troops for regular siege.'<sup>1</sup> Clinton could not spare enough troops as 'Washington was lying ready to pour down on New York.'<sup>1</sup>

In September a reinforcement of six ships of the line under Rear-Admiral Thomas Graves joined Arbuthnot, and Rodney suggested that Arbuthnot should leave the blockade in Graves's hands and repair to New York to co-operate with Clinton.

Later on he sent orders to Arbuthnot that if de Ternay escaped, Graves, with eight or ten copper-bottomed ships of the line, was to repair 'without one moment's loss of time' to Martinique as the French fleet could only be bound either to Europe or Fort Royal.

But, beyond despatching a number of frigates to deal with

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich off New York, October 10, 1780.'

the numerous privateers on the Southern coast, no offensive operations were undertaken. 1780

If Rodney had been in better health, he doubtless would have himself investigated the possibilities of attacking the French fleet at Rhode Island. He has been criticised for not doing so and accepting Clinton's view, but a fleet lying under fortress guns was as a rule secure against attack, and a personal reconnaissance would probably not have altered the considered opinion already arrived at.

That Rodney was not at all well is evident from his letters : ' The sudden change of climate makes it necessary for me to go on shore for some time.'<sup>1</sup> ' The very severe weather that happened just before I left New York affected me so much as prevented me putting pen to paper.'<sup>2</sup>

With the approach of winter a new disposition of the fleet was required. ' The season for action in the West Indies is approaching, and not a moment's time shall be lost in doing my duty to His Majesty and to the public.'<sup>3</sup> Arbutnot's squadron was strong enough to deal with de Ternay if he put to sea, and so Rodney sailed once more for the West Indies on the 16th of November, and arrived at Barbados on the 16th of December. Nov 16. Dec. 6

His presence on the American coast had not been barren of results, for it enabled Clinton to meet Cornwallis's request for a diversionary operation in the south without running undue risks. Major-General Leslie with 2,500 troops sailed from Sandy Hook on the 16th of October. The force landed in Virginia, occupied Portsmouth and harried the surrounding country, but the operations were cut short when a letter arrived from Rawdon, begging Leslie to come straight south and join the main army. On obtaining Clinton's approval Leslie embarked his force and arrived at Charleston on the 13th of December. On the 19th he set out to join Cornwallis. Oct. 16 Dec. 13 Dec. 19

Clinton then decided on a second diversionary operation in

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, ' *Sandwich* off Sandy Hook, September 15, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney to Germain, ' *Sandwich*, St. Lucia, December 22, 1780' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>3</sup> Rodney's Despatch, ' *Sandwich* off New York, October 20, 1780.

**1780** Virginia under the command of Brigadier-General Arnold. **This**  
**Dec. 25** expedition sailed from New York on the 25th of December and its operations will be described in a later chapter. Arnold was the same Benedict Arnold who had hitherto proved one of Washington's best Generals, and the story of his treachery is of interest. After Saratoga, Arnold had been given the command at Philadelphia and there he entered into a life of luxury, married a girl who belonged to a loyalist family, and acted without regard to scruple. He made many enemies and when, later on, he announced his intention of retiring from the army and settling down near New York, a number of accusations were brought against him and he was tried by court martial. He was acquitted and appointed to the command of West Point on the Hudson River. Whilst there he got into communication with Clinton and made proposals to betray his important military post.

Clinton's adjutant-general, Major André, who conducted the correspondence, was sent up river in September to arrange the details of the surrender with Arnold. The moment was chosen when Washington was away discussing future plans with the Comte de Rochambeau and de Ternay. André's ship was fired at by American batteries and he was compelled to return in disguise. On his way back he was stopped by some enemy militiamen and, unable to satisfy them, was arrested and subsequently court martialled and shot as a spy. Arnold, as soon as he heard of the arrest, hurried down river and reached New York safely. He was made a Brigadier-General and appointed to raise a corps of cavalry and infantry which he was to command.

The American campaign of 1780 had not been a success. Cornwallis had achieved something, but at the end of the year was in an unenviable position with his communications threatened everywhere. Clinton had held New York, but his army had been weakened by detachments to the south. De Guichen's failure to arrive on the coast, Rodney's unexpected appearance, and Graves's reinforcement had kept the sea lines of communication inviolate, but there was no blockade of the enemy's ports in Europe, and nothing to prevent that sea-command being challenged at any moment. There was still no concentrated effort,

and sailors and soldiers saw the disaster that must result from the continued dispersion of force. 1780

Thus, in reference to the second diversionary expedition under Arnold, Arbuthnot wrote to Germain: 'What can be expected from a separate detachment of 1,600 men towards ending a dispute your Lordship will be informed, for my part I see none.'<sup>1</sup> Rodney also wrote to Germain in similar terms. 'Believe me the acting in North Carolina will only prolong the war. The Northern Colonies should feel the fatal results of their treason. There and there only the war must be finished.'<sup>2</sup>

Arnold of whom Rodney wrote, 'He will do more towards the suppressing of the rebellion than all our generals put together,'<sup>2</sup> had no doubts on the matter. In the plans he submitted for the next year's campaign, he said, 'There are two ways of ending the war. The first is to collect the whole army and beat Washington. The second is to concentrate the whole army except the garrison of New York, to the southward.' But such advice was not acceptable to Clinton or Germain and the first steps along the road to a disastrous end had been taken.

From the correspondence of the day it can be seen that Clinton was not a man of energy and determination. In one of Rodney's letters<sup>2</sup> to Germain the following passages occur. 'I fully intended to have done myself the honour of sending your Lordship the observations I had the opportunity of making during my continuance at New York, and the procrastination with which the American war seemed to me to have been and still was conducted, that your Lordship might be convinced how necessary it was that different modes of carrying on the war should be adopted in order to its being brought to a speedy conclusion, which in my poor opinion had long since been effected, and with honour to Great Britain, had those persons who were entrusted with the command of her fleets and her armies preferred their own, their King's and country's honour to lucrative and factious

<sup>1</sup> Arbuthnot to Germain, New York, December 19, 1780 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Rodney to Germain, 'Sandwich, St. Lucia, December 22, 1780' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

1780 motives by which means they have, according to my conception of things, betrayed the whole, and ought to be held forth, and undergo the just punishment and resentment of an injured nation.' He goes on to say that the extinction of the rebellion is being retarded 'to make the fortunes of a long train of leeches who suck the blood of the State, and whose interest prompts them to promote the continuance of the war, such as Quarter Masters and their deputies, *ad infinitum*, Barrack Masters and their deputies, *ad infinitum*, Commissaries and their deputies, *ad infinitum*, all of which make princely fortunes, laugh in their sleeves at the Generals. . . .' He added that the General, though brave and honest, was too fond of the luxuries of New York life and allowed himself to be cooped up there by Washington's inferior army.

Rodney was a very severe critic, but there was probably a great deal of truth in his censorious remarks. His criticism of the policy of continually capturing positions and then giving them up was certainly sound. He pointed out that such a form of warfare was wasteful of lives and in the end heartening to the enemy. Germain, too, was alive to this and wrote to Clinton that the abandoning of Portsmouth for the second time was a most unfortunate occurrence, as it afforded a valuable position for future military operations and a good harbour for the fleet.

But Germain himself had little faith in Clinton now. To William Knox he wrote in December—'I expect little exertion from that quarter. . . . When we are to act with such a man as Clinton we must be cautious not to give him an opportunity of doing a rash action under the sanction of what he may call a positive order.'<sup>1</sup>

Before leaving the operations in America we must glance for a moment at the minor fighting in Florida and Nicaragua which took place during the year.<sup>2</sup>

In January a small combined expedition under Don Bernard Galvez, Governor of Louisiana, left New Orleans to attack Mobile,

<sup>1</sup> Germain to Knox, 'Pall Mall, December 29, 1780' (H.M.C. Captain H. V. Knox MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> See Map XII.

which was held by a weak British garrison. Owing to storms the force did not appear opposite Mobile until the 1st of March. A summons was sent to Captain Durnford but he determined to fight. Twelve days later the besiegers' batteries opened and next day Durnford was forced to surrender. 1780 Mar. 1

In February a force of 400 men under Captain Polson sailed from Jamaica for the Honduras coast with the intention of capturing Fort St. Juan in Nicaragua. Polson was led to expect that a large number of Mosquito Indians would join him, and several weeks were spent in endeavouring to collect these much needed reinforcements without much success. Further delay occurred owing to difficulties in obtaining the necessary small craft for the St. Juan River, and it was not until the 20th of March that the expedition anchored in St. John's harbour. Here the *Hinchinbrook*, Captain Nelson, joined and the force began to move up river on the 1st of April. Feb. Mar. 20 April 1

They had a terrible journey, but Nelson's impetuosity and skill won through, and on the 13th the heavy guns opened fire on the Fort. The force was so weak after its exertions in the deadly climate that nearly every gun was laid either by Nelson or an engineer officer named Despard. April 13

The garrison capitulated after six days' resistance, but the effect of the many delays that had occurred was soon felt. Reinforcements were sent from Jamaica, but the troops gradually dwindled away with sickness until there was nothing left but to retreat back to the sea. In November Fort St. Juan was blown up and Nicaragua evacuated. Nov.

A badly organised and badly conducted affair, a dissipation of force, a waste of many valuable lives, with the one redeeming feature that it gave Nelson a chance of proving himself. He was quick to take it, and, from the moment he appeared on the scene, he showed what determination, bravery, foresight and personality could do.

The operations in America during 1780 illustrate extremely well the consequences of dispersing military effort. During the latter part of the year there was a powerful British fleet in North American waters, but, as there was no adequate indication of



1780 how and where that force should be used to further the efforts of the army, war against trade and prize-money occupied the attention of the naval commanders. The Army and Navy, working in close co-operation and concentrated with a definite objective, might have achieved much. As it was the power of the British forces was wittled away as a result of ill-considered plans and petty jealousies.

## CHAPTER XVI

### EUROPEAN WATERS, 1780

It will be remembered that Rear-Admiral Digby, who with a division of the Channel fleet had taken part in the relief of Gibraltar early in the year, parted company with Rodney on the 18th of February and shaped course for returning to England. 1780  
Feb. 18

On the 23rd he fell in with a large French convoy consisting of two ships of the line, two large storeships and thirteen other vessels bound to Mauritius. Digby at once hoisted the signal to chase and, whilst the majority of the Frenchman showed a clean pair of heels, his ships were able to come up with and capture one of the ships of the line and three merchant ships. As will be seen later the capturing of storeships bound for the East Indies had a considerable effect on the operations in those distant seas, where there were few local resources. Feb. 23

Sir Charles Hardy, worn out in mind and body, died in the spring and the Government was once more in a quandary to find a successor. Barrington, the second in command, was offered the post but refused. His letter to Middleton reveals a lamentable state of affairs. 'A man must see with my eyes, and have my feelings before he can account for my refusing the command. If our superiors had those feelings, and only their King and country's interest at heart, we might in time be ourselves again. Had I been in command, what I have seen since I have been here would have made me run mad. A total relaxation of discipline, and the rule laid down by a great man that we are all alike, must in the end be productive of bad consequences.'<sup>1</sup>

The choice fell on Admiral Francis Geary, an old and frail man, whose past services did not indicate that he had any

<sup>1</sup> Barrington to Middleton, 'Portsmouth, May 22, 1780' (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

1780 special claim for selection. He hoisted his flag on board the  
 May 24 *Victory* on the 24th of May. Barrington agreed to remain on as  
 second in command, and Kempenfelt retained his post of First  
 Captain.

June 5 On the 5th of June orders to proceed to sea were received  
 from the Admiralty, and the fleet of twenty-one ships of the line  
 June 16- cleared from St. Helen's three days later. Between the 16th  
 27 and 27th the fleet cruised off Ushant as it was known that about  
 June 28 thirty sail of the line were lying in Brest, but, on the 28th, Geary  
 decided to move north to a rendezvous off the Lizard as 'the  
 great object of my instructions is to prevent a junction of the  
 enemy's squadrons,' and also as he was 'recommended to have  
 as much attention as possible to the homeward-bound convoys  
 and to intercept Paul Jones.'<sup>1</sup> But on the 29th he received  
 June 29 orders from the Admiralty to detach a part of the fleet to operate  
 in Spanish waters. In view of the strength of the enemy fleets,  
 he called a Council of Flag Officers. They were 'unanimously  
 of opinion that the fleet should not be separate but proceed  
 together, first off Ferrol, and not meeting with the ships as men-  
 tioned in the intelligence of the 28th instant, to proceed according  
 to Their Lordships' directions in quest of the ships mentioned  
 in Commodore Johnstone's intelligence.'<sup>2</sup> He accordingly moved  
 south with the whole fleet to a rendezvous forty-five miles west  
 of Finisterre.

July 3 On the 3rd of July he gave chase to a large French convoy  
 but lost them in fog. Next day he had better luck and took  
 thirteen prizes out of a French convoy homeward-bound from  
 July 18 Port-au-Prince. On the 18th a Swedish ship was spoken who  
 reported having sighted twenty sail of the line off Finisterre, and  
 July 22 on the 22nd a ship brought a letter from Commodore Johnstone  
 with the information that a combined fleet of thirty sail of the  
 line, three frigates and two fireships had sailed from Cadiz on the  
 9th or 10th, with the intention of joining the ships at Ferrol and  
 Brest, and, after concentration, threatening the Channel. But no

<sup>1</sup> Geary's Despatches, '*Victory* at sea, June 27 and 28, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> Geary's Despatch, '*Victory* at sea, June 29, 1780. Ushant N. 8., E. 65 miles.'

ships of the line were sighted by the British fleet and Geary 1780  
moved north again to a rendezvous off Ushant.

On the 8th of August having been 'nine weeks at sea without Aug. 8  
any fresh provisions,'<sup>1</sup> and with a heavy sick list and short of  
water, Geary decided to return to Spithead. He received orders  
to divide his ships between Plymouth and Portsmouth, but 'as  
the Cadiz fleet of thirty-one sail of the line put to sea on the 9th  
of last month' and he 'apprehended that they might have made  
a junction with the Brest fleet,' he 'judged it advisable to keeping  
the whole fleet together,'<sup>2</sup> and the fleet anchored at Spithead  
on the 18th of August and landed over 2,000 sick. Aug. 18

Kempenfelt was very dissatisfied with the Admiral's choice  
of cruising ground. In a letter to Middleton he pointed out that  
British homeward-bound ships from the East and West Indies  
did not pass through the area, and therefore there was no likeli-  
hood of meeting enemy squadrons on the look out for that trade.  
Nor, he added, was the fleet in a position to prevent the enemy  
from concentrating in one or other of their harbours or near  
enough to England to obtain early intelligence of enemy move-  
ments from the Admiralty.<sup>3</sup> Whilst in the south, the fleet had  
cruised between 60 and 200 miles off the coast of Portugal.  
It was an area of no strategical importance and Kempenfelt's  
criticism was fully justified.

On the 26th of August Geary again received orders to proceed Aug. 26  
to sea with the whole fleet, or, if that was impracticable, to send  
twelve of the line under Digby to look out for the Leeward Islands  
fleet, but Digby was not 'to risque an engagement with a force so  
much superior to that which will be under his command.'<sup>4</sup> Geary  
was losing confidence in himself, and asked the Admiralty where  
Digby or the Grand fleet were to cruise as it was 'a matter of  
too much importance in this critical juncture for myself to deter-  
mine and it gave me much concern that I was under the necessity  
of doing it last cruise.'<sup>4</sup> He also wrote that 'it will be impossible

<sup>1</sup> Geary's Despatch, '*Victory* at sea, August 8, 1780. Ushant N. 3, E. 47 leagues.'

<sup>2</sup> Geary's Despatch, '*Victory* at Spithead, August 18, 1780.'

<sup>3</sup> *Barham Papers*, vol. i. (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>4</sup> Geary's letter to Admiralty, '*Victory* at Spithead, August 26, 1780.'

1780 for me to hinder a junction of the enemy's squadrons and protect the trade at the same time.' <sup>1</sup>

In this he was right. He had sailed before with two objects and the result was that he achieved nothing. The Admiralty should have given him one definite object, either to protect the homecoming trade or prevent the enemy concentrating.

Geary soon broke down. 'The present person is brave, generous,' wrote Kempenfelt, 'and may perhaps have been a good officer; but he is wholly debilitated in his faculties, his memory and judgment lost, wavering and indetermined in everything,' <sup>2</sup> and Captain Cornwall, who went to see the Admiral shortly after the return of the fleet, wrote—'I think the Admiral will hardly be sound enough for another year: he seems tottering and training towards childhood again.' <sup>3</sup>

On the 27th of August Geary wrote that he was unable to get out of bed and thought it 'My duty to my King, my country and Their Lordships to enclose the Doctor's opinion on the state of my health.' <sup>4</sup> The opinion which was signed by his own doctor and the senior doctor at Haslar, began, 'The Admiral, thro' a constant fatigue and hurry of business added to an over anxiety of mind seems to have exhausted his strength.'

His request for leave was approved, and the Government offered the command once more to Barrington, who again refused. Geary was then asked if he was well enough to hoist his flag again, but he replied that he was not, and the choice fell on Vice-Admiral Darby.

Kempenfelt retained his post. He was now in his prime, and his energy and intellect are clearly seen in the many improvements in signalling, gunnery, tactics, ship-building and discipline that occurred whilst he was First Captain.

Sept. 15 On the 15th of September Darby took the fleet to sea to operate against French trade, but met with little success and was  
Oct. at anchor again in Torbay on the 23rd. He sailed again in October but experienced continuous bad weather.

<sup>1</sup> Geary's letter to Admiralty, 'Victory at Spithead, August 26, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>3</sup> Cornwall to Middleton, *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>4</sup> Geary's letter to Admiralty, 'Victory at Spithead, August 27, 1780.'

The enemy had intended to effect a big concentration earlier in the year. The French Government had promised their ally that Don Cordova's fleet would be reinforced by a large French force, but owing to the despatch of de Guichen's and de Ternay's squadrons across the Atlantic, this promise was not fully carried out. They were able, however, to fit out a squadron of seven of the line under M. de Bausset. When this reinforcement arrived Cordova put to sea and in August, when cruising 250 miles west of Cape St. Vincent, he fell in with a large British convoy of sixty-three ships, including troop transports and supply ships for the East Indies. Only eight ships escaped capture and the value of those taken in men, money and material was immense. Shortly after this success, Cordova was joined by still another squadron from Toulon and several ships from Brest and Rochefort, and, on the 23rd of October, de Guichen arrived with eighteen ships of the line and eight frigates. The total force was thus brought up to sixty-seven of the line, whilst Darby could only count on twenty-four.

1780

Aug.

Oct. 23

This great concentration did not last for long as the French Government decided to withdraw their ships to their Home Ports to refit for the next year's campaign, and, on the 30th, the French ships sailed under command of d'Estaing, who had been sent to Cadiz for the purpose. A violent gale drove the fleet back to Cadiz and it did not sail again till the 7th of November, and then took nearly two months to reach Brest.

Oct. 30

Nov. 7

And so the year ended without a single exchange of broadsides by the big fleets. The combined fleet only intended to cruise against commerce, and, as the value of the captured convoy was estimated at £1,500,000 and 2,865 seamen, soldiers, and women were made prisoners, its operations may have caused some satisfaction to the Allied Governments. But that great fleet had accomplished nothing definite, nothing to influence the course of the war.

The British fleet on the other hand was given too many objects and also accomplished nothing.

The popular clamour that arose against the British Government when the news of the convoy disaster arrived home was partly pacified by the simple, if unjust, process of court martialling

1780 the Captain of the escort. But the people were right. Their Navy had done little to justify its existence.

The well-proven strategy of watching Brest had been replaced by spectacular cruises of a 'Grand Fleet.' De Bausset was left perfectly free to join Cordova when he chose, and ships in the other Atlantic seaboard ports could sail where and when they liked. The valuable convoy would probably have arrived home safely, if Cordova had not been strengthened in ships and energy by the French reinforcements.

None of the belligerents had any cause to be satisfied with the operations in Home Waters. It was a period of stagnation. No imagination in planning, no attempt to act offensively, no earnest endeavours to seek out the enemy redeemed a dull year.

In the course of the year the British Government found itself faced with the difficulties that always arise when a maritime power at war attempts to impose its will on neutrals. A country that is able to control the sea lines of communication cannot be expected to permit neutrals to trade at will with their enemy, and, on account of that trade being extraordinarily profitable, neutrals always strongly resent interference. The usual practice of publishing a list showing all goods regarded as contraband had been carried out, and the searching and detaining that resulted had for some time caused murmuring in the Courts of Europe, the final act which fanned the smouldering fire into activity being the stopping of a Dutch convoy escorted by ships of war in command of an Admiral.

The lead was taken by the Empress of Russia. In February she sent a declaration to the Courts of London, Versailles and Madrid, in which Russia's grievances against the belligerents were enumerated. This declaration first stated that Russian subjects had been molested in their navigation and retarded in their commercial pursuits, instead of being allowed to enjoy the fruits of their industry. To remedy this state of affairs belligerents were requested to allow neutral ships to enjoy a free navigation, even from port to port, on their coasts and to look on all effects belonging to their subjects, when on board neutral ships, as free, excepting only such goods as were stipulated contraband.

Reference was also made to the existing Treaty with Great

Britain of 1734, by which neutral ships were to be permitted to pass freely to and fro except to properly blockaded ports, only certain munitions of war being considered as liable to seizure, and even then nothing in the ship but those munitions to be seized, and the ship allowed to continue her course. In conclusion, the Empress stated that she was determined to support the rights of her country by force if necessary. 1780

At the same time the Russian Government gave orders for twenty sail of the line to be put in commission and the Empress also called on the States General, Denmark, Sweden and Portugal to unite in defending neutral rights.

The British Government was thus placed in the same quandary as Pitt's Government during the Seven Years War. Every ship and every man was required for the war with France, Spain and America, and the only way out was to follow Pitt's lead and acquiesce to the dictation of the neutral powers, especially as by July, 1781, Russia, Denmark and Sweden had no fewer than eighty-four ships of war in commission, and the 'Armed Neutrality' held the whip hand.

History was also to repeat itself in British relations with Holland. By an existing Treaty Holland should have assisted Great Britain when France declared war, but Sir Joseph Yorke, the Ambassador at the Hague, could get no satisfactory replies to his diplomatic notes. In the Seven Years War the Dutch had evaded their responsibilities on the plea that England had fired the first shot, but now there was no such easy way out as France and Spain had been the aggressors. However, a way was found, and, in March, the Dutch Government informed the Ambassador that their reading of the Treaty was that their assistance could only be called on in case of war on the continent. Harsh judgment should not be passed as they were in a most unenviable plight. If they honoured their signature, their continental neighbours would soon rob them of their independence; if they dishonoured their signature, their island neighbour would soon ruin their trade. Mar.

In April a Royal Proclamation was issued suspending all the stipulations respecting navigation and commerce between Great Britain and the States General. But the actual declaration of April



- 1780 war was the result of a curious incident on the Newfoundland Station. On the 10th of September two frigates captured the packet *Mercury*, bound from Philadelphia to Amsterdam, and amongst her passengers was Henry Laurens, late President of Congress and now Envoy of Congress to Holland. As the *Vestal* came up with the *Mercury*, a sailor on the fore-castle espied something floating and a boat was lowered to pick up the object, which turned out to be a leather bag containing Laurens' papers. Amongst the papers was a 'Treaty of Commerce between Congress and the Magistracy of Amsterdam.' As soon as the frigate arrived home with this important paper, the British Government sent a copy to the Ambassador with directions to call for explanations.
- Oct. 20 On the 20th of October the Assembly of the States General met to discuss the matter. It was agreed that the papers were private correspondence, and a resolution was passed to the effect that the independence of America had never been recognised.

The Amsterdam merchants, when asked to explain their action, stated that the Treaty was only intended to come into force if the Independence of the Colonists was recognised by the British Government. But that Government was not to be so easily satisfied, and in November a demand for the punishment of the offenders was presented by Yorke, accompanied by the threat of war if not complied with. The Dutch Government procrastinated, and after waiting several weeks for an answer, Yorke left the Hague and an open rupture took place. On Nov. the 20th of December a Manifesto was published giving reasons for commencing hostilities and, on the 22nd, the 'Order for Reprisals' was sent out.

The Dutch Navy was distributed as follows :—

Twelve ships of the line and fifteen frigates in Home Waters.

Five ships of the line and ten frigates in the West Indies.

Four ships of the line in the East Indies.

About seven ships of the line were in reserve. This was not a formidable force, nor one of marked efficiency, but it was a further reinforcement to the Allies, who were already greatly superior in numbers, and the British Admiralty had not the wherewithal to meet the situation.

An effort was made during the year to bring hostilities between Great Britain and Spain to an end. In November 1779 Florida Blanca, Charles III's Minister, received information from some source that the British Government might be willing to purchase peace with Spain by the cession of Gibraltar. An Irish priest named Hussey, who had been chaplain to the Spanish Embassy in London, was chosen as agent. Hussey came to England and got into touch with Richard Cumberland, Germain's secretary, and, after various conversations, he returned to Spain with authority to state that any friendly overtures from Spain would be welcomed. No mention of Gibraltar was made. In January 1780 Hussey once more arrived in England, this time with definite proposals from Florida Blanca which included the cession of Gibraltar. Though the British Cabinet wavered for a moment, it was finally decided that no proposals for giving up Gibraltar could be entertained and Hussey returned to Madrid, accompanied this time by Cumberland, who had orders to endeavour to keep the door open for negotiations.

Cumberland spent many months in Madrid in fruitless endeavours to carry out his mission, and one of the most interesting remarks in his many letters to Germain is contained in one dated the 30th of August. 'Cordova's success has so changed affairs that I retreat from my confidence and coincide with your suspicions.'<sup>1</sup> And so it is possible that that one minor success of the Spanish fleet, which was due to the faulty British strategy, altered the whole course of events.

Great Britain had thus to face the New Year without a friend in the world. In nearly every sea and ocean enemy fleets were challenging her power and preparing to wrest away her hardly won overseas possessions. The land war in America, Central America and India was going against her. The maintenance of supplies and reinforcements to all the theatres of war was becoming a burden almost impossible to bear. The 'Armed Neutrality' was watching every move, and whittling away the power of the Navy to damage her enemies' sources of supply.

<sup>1</sup> Cumberland to Germain, 'Madrid, August 30, 1780' (H.M.C. Stopford Sackville MSS.).

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FIGHT FOR THE WEST INDIAN ISLANDS— FOURTH PHASE—1781

1780 PARLIAMENT met in November 1780 and the addresses were carried by a large majority despite very keen criticism by the Opposition, which was more especially directed against the rupture with Holland which had occurred during the recess. Ninety thousand seamen and marines were voted and a total sum of £25,300,000 for the services, while every effort was made to commission more ships and increase the land forces. Vice-Admiral Hyde Parker was appointed to command a North Sea squadron to watch the Dutch fleet; Commodore Johnstone was appointed to command a secret expedition to the Cape of Good Hope; and Vice-Admiral Darby remained in command of the Grand fleet.

In October 1780 M. de Castries succeeded Sartine as Minister of Marine and one of his first actions was to appoint de Grasse to the command in the West Indies, Suffren to the East Indies, and de Barras to the North American Squadron. De Grasse was fifty-eight years of age. He had joined the service when twelve years old and as a youngster had fought in Le Jonquière's action with Anson in 1747.

Suffren was four years younger. He, too, had been serving at sea from a very young age and had seen active service before he was twenty. He had taken part in the operations against Port Mahon in 1756, and was present at the battle off Lagos in 1759. His reputation as a seaman and a fearless fighting leader was firmly established.

The first serious operations of the year took place against the French and Dutch possessions in the West Indies.

Rodney, with eight of the line, arrived at Barbados from New York on the 6th of December 1780 to find a scene of desolation.

In addition to the destruction of many ships, the hurricane had ruined a large quantity of the naval stores at Barbados, St. Lucia, and Jamaica. 1780

His own squadron had suffered in a gale during the passage south, and his own requirements, added to those of the West Indies Station ships that were still afloat, were quite beyond the capacity of the repairing bases. There were no docking facilities and the only means of repairing under-water damage was by careening the ships, a long and difficult process. He fully expected a French concentration of a force from Brest under La Touche-Tréville, the squadron from Cap François under M. Monteil and, possibly, de Ternay's squadron from Rhode Island. He called on Sir Peter Parker to send stores from Jamaica, wrote home that nothing could be done till Hood arrived with a convoy, and sailed for St. Lucia.

Despite this handicap, the Admiral was soon busy preparing for offensive operations in conjunction with General Vaughan. St. Vincent was their first objective, as recent intelligence reports stated that the hurricane had damaged the island to such an extent that it could easily be retaken. The necessary troops were embarked and the expedition was ready to sail by the 10th of December, but the Admiral suddenly decided to abandon the operation. Two days later he again changed his mind and the fleet finally sailed on the 14th. Dec. 10 Dec. 14

The delay was invaluable to the French because the news of the intended project reached the ears of de Bouillé, who at once gave orders that armament stores and provisions were to be sent to the island with all despatch.

The fleet made the island on the 15th and Rodney ordered Drake to take four ships under his orders and make a feint of landing near the town.

At 10 A.M. the British troops landed without opposition but, on advancing inland, it was soon discovered that the French had taken up a strong position on the high land above Kingston, and the General and Admiral decided against further operations. The troops were re-embarked and the expedition returned to St. Lucia. Dec. 15

1780 The state of the fleet at this time was causing Rodney much concern. 'I have only nine sail of the line now with me capable of going to sea, not one of which has spare rigging or sails.<sup>1</sup> But he was soon to receive a welcome reinforcement for, early in 1781 January, Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood arrived with eight ships Jan. of the line, having escorted out over a hundred West Indiamen.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for Hood's appointment are of interest. During the first years of the war he was Commissioner of Portsmouth Dockyard, a post that did not as a rule lead to further employment.

There was, however, great difficulty in finding the right man on account of the strong feeling amongst naval officers that Sandwich would not treat them fairly; Rodney's temperament also had to be taken into consideration.

In July 1780 Sandwich wrote to Rodney—'I know not what to do to find a good second in command for you, but you may depend on my having that matter in my serious consideration and that I will endeavour to pitch on a person who I think will be likely to second you properly and with proper subordination.'<sup>3</sup> Again two months later he wrote—'It has been difficult, very difficult to find out proper flag officers to serve under you. Some are rendered unfit from their factious connexions, others from inferiority or insufficiency and we have at last been obliged to make a promotion in order to do the thing properly.'<sup>3</sup> This special promotion gave Hood the chance he was longing for. Much arduous service fell to his lot in the next two years, and he was soon to prove that he was a born leader of men and a skilled fleet commander.

Meanwhile refitting proceeded as fast as the scanty means allowed, and by the end of the month Rodney was in command of twenty-one ships of the line.

Jan. 27 On the 27th of January a frigate arrived from home with orders for an immediate attack on the Dutch West Indian Islands. These orders must have been very welcome to the two commanders,

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich* off the Carenage, St. Lucia, December 22, 1780.'

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix XIII.

<sup>3</sup> Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*.

as St. Eustatius had been a thorn in the British side ever since the commencement of hostilities. The island had become a great store depôt under a neutral flag from which the American Continent and enemy islands obtained supplies. The French and Americans also sent their sugar, cotton, tobacco, hemp and lumber to the island in Dutch bottoms as it was a unique position from which to sail convoys to Europe. The Dutch settlers waxed fat, and a discreditable feature of this free-trading was the number of British subjects engaged in the traffic. Hood had missed twelve of his convoy when approaching the islands, and they were found at St. Eustatius unloading their cargoes when the island was taken. 1781

It was from this island that de Guichen had obtained materials and shipwrights when he was lying in Basseterre after his first action with Rodney. On the other hand, the merchants failed to meet Rodney's demands for rope and other stores after the great storm, though great quantities were in stock at the time.

Rodney put to sea on the 30th, and, after showing himself off Fort Royal and St. Pierre, Martinique, 'to prevent the French penetrating our design,'<sup>1</sup> shaped course for St. Eustatius, leaving six of the line under Rear-Admiral Drake to watch the four French ships of the line in Fort Royal. Hood was sent forward to prevent any ships escaping from the harbour and, on the 3rd of February, the main fleet arrived off the island. A summons was at once sent to M. de Graaf, the Governor, who had no choice but to surrender as the island had no military defences. Moreover, he did not know that a state of war existed between the two countries and his 'surprise and astonishment was scarce to be conceived.'<sup>1</sup> Jan. 30 Feb. 3

The stories of the wealth collected in the great depôt were soon found to be true. The lower town consisted of a range of store-houses about one and a quarter miles in length which were let an annual rent of £1,200,000. The value of the stores seized was estimated at £3,000,000. Over one hundred and fifty richly loaded merchant ships were taken and six frigates were seized and commissioned for service in the British fleet.

Rodney's Despatch, '*Sandwich*, St. Eustatius, February 4, 1780.

1781      Soon after his arrival, Rodney received information that a valuable convoy had cleared the harbour two days before, and he despatched two ships of the line in chase. A short engagement ensued with the escort ship, a Dutch '60,' and the thirty ships in convoy were brought back and added to the booty. The neighbouring islands of St. Martin and Saba also surrendered.

The King gave the spoils to the Army and Navy with the result that Rodney and Vaughan remained at St. Eustatius on various pretexts for three months, during which their conduct raised a storm of criticism and much scandal. Reports eventually reached the Home Press and the matter was taken up in Parliament.

The intention of the commanders had been to follow up their blow by an attack on Surinam and Curaçoa, but the glittering treasure was too much and they gave up everything. Hood, who had been warned for the command of the Curaçoa expedition, was furious. Finding that he could not move Rodney, he tried to influence Vaughan but without result. He spoke his mind when the General made excuses. 'This is very surprising, General, for when you urged me so pressingly to speak to Sir George upon this business you did not know but you might meet with resistance here and have your force diminished; but now you have got possession without the loss of a man you fly from your own proposition, which is what I wouldn't have expected from General Vaughan.'<sup>1</sup>

Feb. 11      The treasure collectors were not left long in peace, for on the 11th of February a vessel from Europe arrived with the important news that on the 31st of December, when 150 miles north-west of Finisterre, she had sighted a French squadron consisting of nine or ten ships of the line and a large convoy of seventy vessels steering for the West Indies. Hood was at once ordered to sail with eleven of the line, pick up Drake's six ships off Fort Royal, and take up a position to intercept the French squadron.<sup>2</sup>

Rodney remained at St. Eustatius, but 'when the very great and important concerns which absolutely require the attendance

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barbadoes, June 24, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix XX.

of General Vaughan and myself at this island is settled'<sup>1</sup> intended to join Hood. He had just completed the loading of the ships detailed to take the booty home, and wrote requesting the Admiralty to send out a squadron to see the convoy safely up-Channel. In the same despatch he was able to report that the Dutch possessions, Demerara and Issequibo, and the French island of St. Bartholomew had surrendered. 1781

On the 6th of March he reported that Hood's squadron was 'spread in such a manner to windward of Martinique and Dominica with the frigates disposed at a proper distance that it will be almost impossible for an enemy to approach without being discovered.'<sup>2</sup> But on the 17th he became convinced that the French squadron had 'gone to some other part of the world,'<sup>3</sup> and ordered Hood to blockade the four ships lying in Fort Royal to prevent them attacking his rich convoy. It was a most unfortunate decision. He was right in assuming that the squadron reported off Finisterre on the 81st were not bound for the West Indies, but, unknown to him, a much more powerful fleet was about to appear in the area of his command.

Hood had no doubts that the only position for his ships was to windward, where he could bring the French to action under advantageous conditions as they would be hampered by the convoy, and at the same time prevent the newcomers and the ships at Fort Royal concentrating. He pleaded, he wrote, he argued, but nothing would move Rodney. 'But doubtless,' he wrote, 'there never was a squadron so unmeaningly stationed as the one under my command, and what Sir George Rodney's motive for it could be I cannot conceive unless it was to cover him at St. Eustatius. . . . I gave my reasons against it. . . . I urged him upon the same score in several subsequent letters, and in my private ones was still stronger, but he was not to be prevailed upon to let me go to windward.'<sup>4</sup> 'The Lares of St. Eustatius were so bewitching as not to be withstood by flesh and blood . . . it would doubtless have been fortunate for the public

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, St. Eustatius, February 12, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, St. Eustatius, March 6, 1781.'

<sup>3</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, St. Eustatius, March 17, 1781.'

<sup>4</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur at sea, May 21, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).



1781 had Sir George been with the fleet, as I am confident he would have been to windward instead of to leeward when de Grasse made his approach. The Admiral and General have a great deal to answer for, which I told them long ago, and they begin now to be in a squeeze, as many of their actions will not bear the daylight.' <sup>1</sup> It was true that a fleet to leeward could do little, but Rodney was not entirely to blame. The Home Authorities had failed to do their part.

It was not long before the dispositions were put to the test and found wanting.

April 28 At 7 A.M. on the 28th of April a frigate stationed off Point Salines made the signal 'enemy in sight,' and by noon Hood had definite information that he was in the presence of a much larger French fleet than he had been led to expect. It was de Grasse with twenty ships of the line (including one of 110 guns and three of 80 guns) and a large convoy of 150 sail. He had cleared from Brest on the 22nd of March with twenty-six of the line, but five had been detached under Suffren to operate in the Indian Ocean and one to North America.

Hood's force of seventeen ships was inferior in gun power, and was in the leeward position. The one advantage it possessed was that the ships, being coppered, were faster sailers than their opponents. During the night Hood worked to windward and sent frigates out to watch the enemy. Soon after 9 o'clock the

April 29 next morning the enemy were seen coming round the south of the Island, with the transports sailing close in shore, and Hood made the signal for closing up the line and preparing for action.

At 10.35 the British fleet tacked and headed to the northward. The enemy, who by this time had rounded the Diamond Rock, were also heading in the same direction and, as a result of Hood's turn, their van ship came abreast of the British centre.

At 11 the French opened an ineffectual fire at long range. At 11.20 Hood again tacked together and stood to the southward and the enemy replied by wearing round to the same course. An interchange of broadsides took place as the British van passed the French rear.

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barbadoes, June 24, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

In the meantime the four French ships in Fort Royal Bay had slipped their cables and joined de Grasse, giving him a superiority of six ships. 1781

At 11.55 Hood 'invited the enemy's fleet to come to me by bringing the squadron to under the topsails.' <sup>1</sup>

By 12.30 the French flagship was abreast of the British flagship and firing became general at long range. 'And, I believe,' wrote Hood, 'never was more powder and shot thrown away in one day before, but it was with M. de Grasse that the option of distance lay, and he preferred that of long shot.' <sup>1</sup>

At 1 P.M., seeing the French were drawing ahead, Hood signalled to his van to fill, and at 1.17 to the leading ship to make more sail, but it was of no avail as de Grasse had no intention of coming to close quarters.

Firing ceased generally at 1.30, but some sharp fighting took place between the van ships later on, when four British ships withstood the attack of eight Frenchmen and received a good deal of damage.

The *Russell* subsequently reported she was making water rapidly, and Hood ordered her to part company before nightfall and make for St. Eustatius.

Variable winds and calm during the night caused the van and centre of the British fleet to become separated, but by 7 A.M. line of battle was formed and the French fleet appeared to be coming down to attack from to windward. But no attack was made. April 30  
About noon a fresh breeze sprung up, and Hood hoisted the 'chase to windward' signal. But it fell calm again at 4 o'clock. By that time two more of the van ships, *Centaur* and *Intrepid*, were leaking badly, and as there were also 1,500 men sick and short of complement in the fleet, Hood 'judged it improper to dare the enemy to battle any longer, not having the least prospect of beating a fleet of twenty-four sail of the line of capital ships.' <sup>1</sup> At 7 in the evening he shaped course to the northward, as the currents to the southward and leeward of St. Lucia would have prevented the damaged ships regaining that island.

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Rodney, 'Barfleur at sea, 40 leagues south from Eustatius, May 4, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

- 1781 De Grasse anchored at Fort Royal on the 6th of May.  
 May 6 The *Russell* arrived at St. Eustatius on the 4th of May and  
 May 4 as soon as Rodney heard the startling news of the strength of  
 the French fleet he put to sea. Hood and Rodney joined forces  
 May 11 on the 11th between St. Kitts and Antigua, and anchored off the  
 latter island to take in stores.

It was all very regrettable. That such a large French squadron could leave a European port and arrive after a long voyage in the West Indies without the British Admiral receiving previous intelligence showed great laxity at home. As Hood wrote 'had a small fast sailing vessel have left England a fortnight after their departure from Brest she must have been there before them.'<sup>1</sup> If that vital intelligence had been received, Rodney himself would have sailed from St. Eustatius to take command and doubtless, as Hood suggests, would have cruised to windward. De Grasse, hampered by his transports, and deprived of any chance of the Fort Royal ships, which were to leeward, joining him, would then have been in an unenviable position. His way would have been barred by a fleet of copper-bottomed ships which could force or refuse action.

As it was, Hood did remarkably well. He took risks, he manœuvred skilfully awaiting an opportunity to strike, and proved himself a bold and capable fleet commander.

De Grasse displayed the usual caution of French Admirals. He achieved his main object, but early in the day it must have been obvious that the transports would get safely into harbour as Hood was to leeward. He kept the windward position throughout the operations and could have attacked with his superior numbers and metal when he chose, but he contented himself with a long-range bombardment. He lost a great chance, but possibly, like his predecessor, was content to have damaged one or two British ships and kept his own fleet intact. In justice to de Grasse it must be stated that he maintained that it was Hood, with his superior coppered ships, who avoided action during the operations. The accounts cannot be reconciled, but, which ever view is accepted, Hood's skill as a tactician remains unquestioned.

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur at sea, May 21, 1781.

It is of interest to note that Bougainville, distinguished 1781  
 mathematician, lawyer, and one of Montcalm's ablest Generals  
 during the operations in Canada in 1759, was serving as a Rear-  
 Admiral with de Grasse.

The French were not slow to take advantage of the absence  
 of the British fleet from the neighbourhood of St. Lucia, and de  
 Grasse and de Bouillé were soon busy organising expeditions  
 against that island and Tobago. On the 9th of May both ex- May 9  
 peditions sailed, that against St. Lucia under de Grasse and de  
 Bouillé, and that against Tobago under M. de Blanchlande.

On the 10th the French fleet appeared off the north end of May 10  
 St. Lucia, and a landing was effected. Next day an advance  
 was made and communications cut between Gros Islet Bay and  
 Morne Fortuné. A summons was sent to Captain Campbell,  
 commanding the small garrison, but he replied he would defend  
 his post to the last extremity. Fortunately for him three British  
 frigates arrived in the Carenage, and their crews were landed to  
 assist the garrison (Map XI).

On the 12th de Grasse, thinking that de Bouillé was master May 12  
 of the defences, came to anchor with his whole fleet in Gros Islet  
 Bay. He was soon undeceived by a heavy fire from the Pigeon  
 Island batteries, and was obliged to cut his cables and hurry to  
 sea. The coast being clear a frigate was sent off to inform Rodney  
 of the situation.

But de Bouillé soon came to the conclusion that the British  
 positions were too strong to be taken and the whole enterprise  
 was given up, the troops being re-embarked and the expedition  
 returning to Fort Royal.

In this small operation the power of mobility possessed by  
 ships carrying troops or seamen is clearly shown. As Hood  
 wrote: 'The island of St. Lucia was certainly saved by the  
 fortunate arrival of the three frigates whose Captains were very  
 alert. All the batteries were manned by seamen.'<sup>1</sup>

Rodney, after storing at Antigua, proceeded south to Bar-  
 bados to water. There he heard of the attack on St. Lucia, and  
 the successful resistance of the garrison. On the 27th a despatch May 27

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barbadoes, May 27, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

- 1781 vessel arrived with a letter from Governor Ferguson of Tobago to say the island was invested. Rodney at once ordered Rear-Admiral Drake, with six of the line and a body of troops under General Skene, to proceed to the assistance of the island. He was 'convinced the enemy would make no impression before it was relieved.'<sup>1</sup> Drake was ordered to rejoin the main fleet if the enemy fleet appeared off the island.
- May 30 On the 30th Rodney heard that the French main fleet were to windward of St. Lucia, standing to the southward, and he ordered the fleet to stand by to weigh as soon as Drake's squadron was sighted. That afternoon a despatch vessel sent by Drake reported that the French fleet was off Tobago, but Rodney still thought there was no immediate hurry and did not weigh. At daylight next day Drake was sighted in the offing, and the whole
- May 31 fleet at once proceeded to sea and shaped course for Tobago. When they made the island next afternoon, a large number of sail were seen clearing from Great Courland Bay and a frigate, that had been sent on to reconnoitre, returned with the unpalatable news that the French were in full possession of the island.
- The news was only too true. Drake had met with no success.
- May 29 He had arrived off Tobago on the 29th and sighted de Grasse's fleet of twenty sail-of-the-line to leeward. Realising that his force was far too small to effect anything, he had retired to communicate with his Commander-in-Chief. In any case he was too late, for the French had commenced operations a week before he arrived.
- May 23 A force of 1,300 men had landed under covering fire from a ship of the line on the 23rd of May. Governor Ferguson with his four hundred white men had put up a good fight, but, when de Bouillé and de Grasse arrived on the 31st with reinforcements, he was compelled to order a retreat to a post on the high land. There he put up a gallant fight, but the enemy threatened to set the plantations on fire and he decided to capitulate.
- Rodney was very angry when he heard of the capitulation. He reported that the inhabitants 'not chusing to run the risk of a storm (the Rhetoric of Count Dillon),'<sup>1</sup> had given in because
- <sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, June 22, 1781.'

de Bouillé offered easy terms. He could not possibly retake the island, and, in any case, the French fleet became his principal objective from the moment he saw it clearing from the harbour. 1781

He stood to the northward, and on the afternoon of the 5th of June discerned the French fleet of twenty-four sail to leeward, between Grenada and the Grenadines. But he did not attempt to bring de Grasse to action as 'the situation was such as rendered it impossible to attack them with a probability of success, as it was in their power (night coming on) to entangle His Majesty's Fleet among the Grenadilles, to decoy them into the channel between Grenada and the Spanish Main, where the currents are so very rapid that His Majesty's Fleet might have been drove far to leeward, while the enemy had it in their power to anchor under the batteries of Grenada and rejoice at the sight of the British fleet being caught in their deception and driving far to leeward.'<sup>1</sup> He also was anxious for the safety of Barbados. He hoped de Grasse would follow him, as by next day he would have plenty of sea-room to manœuvre. He ordered lights to be shown conspicuously 'that in case they chose an action they might be sure their wishes would be complied with,'<sup>1</sup> but at daylight next morning there was no sign of the enemy. June 5

As it was evident the French fleet were making for Fort Royal, Rodney detached some troops to reinforce the garrison of St. Lucia, and shaped course with the fleet for Barbados 'to stimulate the inhabitants to a sense of their danger and to protect the convoys daily expected from Cork and Great Britain.'<sup>1</sup> The British fleet was next employed in safeguarding the arrival of convoys from home, small squadrons being spread to windward to look out for enemy vessels.

De Grasse anchored at Fort Royal on the 18th.

June 18

On the 5th of July the British frigate *La Nymphe* sighted a large number of ships coming out of Fort Royal Bay. She was chased away, but stood back in the night and captured a schooner. From prisoners she learnt that the fleet she had sighted was de Grasse's twenty-seven ships of the line and nearly two hundred homeward-bound merchant ships carrying the trade of the French July 5

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Sandwich, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, June 22, 1781.'

1781 islands. The news was taken with all speed to Rodney, who at once despatched sloops to New York and Jamaica to put the Admirals on their guard, and gave orders to Hood to hold himself in readiness to proceed to New York with the majority of the fleet. He recommended Graves and Parker to join Hood at a rendezvous, as 'the speedy junction of such a great force of His Majesty's Fleet, in my opinion, is such as to be capable of defeating the enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

Rodney, whose health was not at all good, took a long time to decide whether he would himself go to North America or return home. This irritated Hood: 'It is quite impossible from the unsteadiness of the Commander-in-Chief to know what he means three days together; one hour he says his complaints are of such a nature that he cannot possibly remain in the country and is determined to leave the command to me; the next he says he has not thought of going home.'<sup>2</sup> No doubt Rodney was in an awkward predicament. On the one hand he felt his health could not stand further active work until he had had a rest; on the other hand he knew of the outcry at home over the St. Eustatius booty, and he had nothing to show but the loss of Tobago. At the same time we must remember that when he arrived home he was in urgent need of medical advice and treatment, and Hood would have shown himself a fairer critic if he had avoided such a captious tone in his letters, and given the Commander-in-Chief some credit for even considering the possibility of remaining in a climate that was ruining his health. Finally Rodney decided for home, and sailed with a convoy of 150 vessels on the 1st of August after handing over the command to Hood.

Shortly after sailing he detached the *Pegasus* with six victuallers to New York, and sent letters to Graves again recommending him to make 'speedy junction' with Hood so that the enemy might have a 'proper reception on their arrival.'<sup>1</sup>

De Grasse arrived at Cap François on the 16th of July, and there he received an urgent request to proceed to New York or

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's letter to Admiralty, 'Gibraltar, in Cork Harbour, September 17, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barbadoes, June 24, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

the Chesapeake, in order to assist Washington and Rochambeau to deal a decisive blow. His subsequent movements are described in a later chapter. 1781

Hood sailed for Antigua on the 2nd of August, sending orders to Drake, who was at St. Lucia with four of the line, to rejoin him. In the evening he fell in with a frigate who reported having seen 'four sail of large ships in Fort Royal Bay,' but could give no details 'as the weather was so hazy he could form no opinion of their size.'<sup>1</sup> He at once cancelled his orders to Drake, and told him to remain where he was if further investigations supported the frigate's report. He gave St. John's, Antigua, as the rendezvous. Aug. 2

Next morning an armed brig with despatches was spoken. The despatches were from Clinton and Graves to Rodney, but Hood opened them and found that they contained news of vital importance. Clinton's letter<sup>2</sup> was written on the 28th of June:— 'Upon reading the enclosed extracts from letters belonging to a rebel Mail which we have intercepted, and of the Minister's letter to me, you will, I am persuaded, concur with me in the opinion that de Grasse may be expected on this coast in the hurricane season, if not before, with all the sea and land forces he can assemble.' He went on to say that he had little doubt that de Grasse would proceed first to Rhode Island to concentrate with de Barras and then proceed against New York. 'Lord Cornwallis's situation at different periods, and the hopes I was flattered with of the early arrival of the promised reinforcements to this part of the army, induced me to detach from hence more than I probably ought. However, as his Lordship's operations in Chesapeak must now cease from the inclemency of the season, I have called back a part of the force, and have recommended it to him to occupy defensive stations in York and James Rivers until the season for operations in that climate shall return.' He had no doubt that the enemy 'intended to finish their business by an attempt against this port,' and gave the numbers operating against him as 8,000 Americans and 5,000 French, but fresh troops

<sup>1</sup> Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur*, off Sandy Hook, August 30, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> Enclosure to Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur*, off Sandy Hook, August 30, 1781.'



1781 were expected to arrive any day from Europe. Finally he asked Rodney to come north in person as 'the present situation of our country requires more than common exertions.'

His appreciation of Washington's intentions was correct. New York was the enemy's objective at the time he wrote. But he was far from the truth in thinking that de Grasse intended to concentrate at Rhode Island.

Graves' letter<sup>1</sup> was written on the 2nd of July. 'The intercepted letter will show you the apprehensions of a considerable force expected from the French Commander-in-Chief in the West Indies, in concert with whom M. de Barras seems to act, and will demonstrate how much the fate of this country must depend upon the early intelligence and detachments which may be sent by you hither upon the first movement of the enemy.' He, too, thought New York was the enemy's objective. 'I shall most certainly keep the squadron under my command as collected as possible, and so placed as to secure a retreat at New York where our stand must be made.'

Amongst the enclosures was a letter from a spy at Rhode Island, written on the 31st of May. He stated that the French intended to abandon Rhode Island, and that the destination of the fleet was 'Delaware or some port of Virginia.' He was actually nearer the truth than either Clinton or Graves, though, at the time he wrote, the decision to concentrate in the Chesapeake had not been made.

After reading the despatches, Hood made up his mind to proceed to the American coast with all despatch. He sailed on Aug. 10 the 10th, and was joined by Drake as he was working out of harbour, the frigate's report of ships in Fort Royal having proved Aug. 25 to be incorrect. On the 25th Cape Henry was sighted, and, after making certain that there were no enemy ships in the Chesapeake or Delaware, Hood, with fourteen of the line, shaped course for New York.

As soon as Hood's back was turned, de Bouillé prepared an Nov. 15 expedition to retake St. Eustatius, and, on the 15th of November, put to sea with 1,500 troops escorted by three frigates. The

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure to Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur*, off Sandy Hook, August 30, 1781.

landing was a complete surprise, and the island passed into French hands. 1781

The fourth phase of the battle for the islands thus ended most unsatisfactorily for the British. De Grasse had been master of the situation and had dictated Rodney's movements throughout. Tobago had passed into French hands and St. Eustatius had been recaptured.

Both the French expedition against St. Lucia and the British expedition against St. Vincent were badly designed and carried out. In the former it should have been an easy matter for de Grasse to stop the frigate reinforcements which turned the scale in favour of the defenders. In the latter correct intelligence as to the strength of the defences could have been obtained without difficulty.

The British operations throughout were affected by the St. Eustatius loot and Rodney's health. Hood commented on the final operations as follows:—'What a wonderful happy turn would have been given to the King's affairs in this country had Sir George Rodney gone with all his force to Tobago as soon as he might and, in my humble opinion, ought to have done. I laboured much to effect it, but all in vain, and fully stated my reasons in writing as soon as the intelligence came. The island in that case would not only have been preserved, but a severe blow given to the French flag as every ship there with all the troops must have fallen into our hands most easily two days before de Grasse got there with twenty-one sail. Nay, had he even gone when Mr. Drake did, the island would have been saved and the enemy could have done nothing with all their force—now they may almost do as they please.'<sup>1</sup> It is true that Rodney was convinced that the defences of the island were adequate to drive off a French attack but, at the same time, he did not show his usual determination to seek out and bring the enemy to action.

On the other hand Hood's criticisms of the disposition of the fleet during the earlier operations were made without full knowledge of the reasons that actuated his Commander-in-Chief. Though Rodney might have guessed that the French would

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barbadoes, June 24, 1781.'

1781 shortly be reinforcing their West Indies squadron, he could hardly have expected that a large enemy fleet would be able to sail westwards from Europe, and arrive in the area of his command, without any previous warning of its movements being received from the Admiralty.

The conduct of the British operations in the fourth phase, if taken as a whole, does not redound greatly to Rodney's credit, but laxity in Home Waters was mainly responsible for a strategical failure which had a cumulative effect.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### BRITISH DEFENSIVE IN NORTH AMERICA, 1781

WHILST Rodney and de Grasse were operating in the West Indies, events on the North American continent and in North American waters were moving steadily towards the crisis. 1781

It will be remembered that Clinton despatched two expeditions to Virginia at the end of 1780 as diversions in favour of Cornwallis, and that the first, under Leslie, received orders to reinforce the Southern Army. The second, consisting of 1,500 men under Benedict Arnold, arrived in the Chesapeake on the 31st of January and proceeded up the James River. Arnold reached Richmond early in February and sent out detachments to destroy warlike stores in the surrounding country. He then returned to Portsmouth.

The expedition had been sent off over an uncommanded sea, and Washington, quick to see there was a chance of cutting off Arnold's little army, urged the French Naval and Military Commanders at Rhode Island to launch an expedition for the purpose. De Ternay had died during the winter and des Touches was in temporary command of the squadron.

Clinton was quite alive to the fact that Cornwallis would be in a precarious position if des Touches commenced offensive operations in the south, and, when Arbuthnot received orders at the end of 1780 to detach five of the line under Graves to the West Indies, he declared that if the naval force was weakened 'the continent will be lost in a critical moment of hope and the King's whole army will be in imminent danger.' He eventually persuaded Arbuthnot to disobey the orders and retain his ships.

At the end of January, Arbuthnot learnt that the French Jan.

1781 squadron was preparing to leave Rhode Island. He at once sailed to take up his watching position in Gardiner's Bay but was struck by a severe storm, which dismasted one of his ships and caused the total loss of the *Culloden*. Washington, who had already despatched 1,200 men under Lafayette to Virginia, heard of this disaster and urged the Rhode Island force to hasten their sailing, but des Touches was a cautious commander and only detached one ship of the line and two frigates.

Feb. 9 The three ships sailed on the 9th of February and Arbuthnot replied by detaching a light squadron, with orders to operate off the Virginia coast. The small French squadron, finding nothing could be done in the Chesapeake, as the ships drew more water than the British ships supporting Arnold, returned to Newport. Their only success was the capture of a British '44' off the Capes.

Arbuthnot in the meantime was busy refitting his ships after the gale. He had to act on the defensive and anchored his ships in a line across the harbour mouth to form fixed defences. By Mar. 9 the 9th of March he was ready for sea again.

Washington, disgusted at the inactivity of the Rhode Island force, went to Newport early in March to persuade the French commanders to take the offensive. His efforts met with success, and des Touches embarked some troops in command of Baron de Viomesail and sailed on the 8th. The news reached Arbuthnot Mar. 8 on the 10th and he at once proceeded to sea <sup>1</sup> 'in the hope of being able to fight the enemy before their entry to the Chesapeake or if practicable to attack them there.' <sup>2</sup> Mar. 10 On the 13th, when not far off the New Jersey coast, he spoke a British vessel bound for New York, which had seen the French fleet the day before to the southward, and he was able to shape course to follow. A north-westerly gale favoured him in the pursuit and his ships, thanks to their coppering, gained steadily on their opponents. Mar. 13

Mar. 16 Early on the 16th, when Cape Henry bore S.W. by W. about forty miles, a frigate reported five strange sails to the north-east, and Arbuthnot knew that he had passed his quarry in the night. He at once made the signal for line of battle and shaped course

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix XXI.

<sup>2</sup> Arbuthnot's Despatch, '*Royal Oak*, Lynnhaven Bay, March 20, 1781.

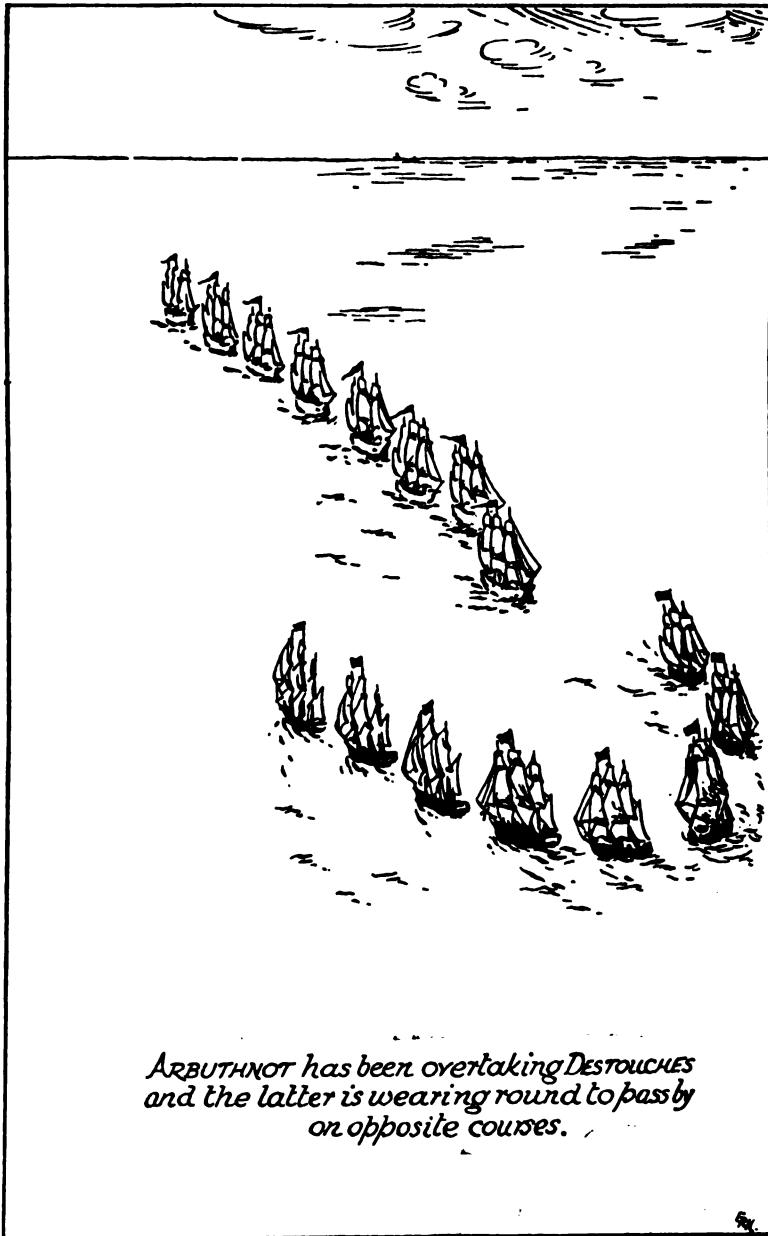


DIAGRAM 14.—BATTLE OF CAPE HENRY, MARCH 16TH, 1781, 1 P.M.

1781 for the last reported position of the enemy. The wind was westerly and the weather 'so hazy that the length of the British line could scarcely be discerned.'<sup>1</sup>

At 8 A.M. he sighted the enemy in the process of forming their line, but, shortly afterwards, the wind veered to north by west and gave the French the windward position. He then began to work up to windward, and, as the haze was thickening, he sent a frigate ahead to keep touch with the enemy. The wind gradually veered to north-east and by noon the British fleet had recovered the windward position. The French fleet had lost ground owing to a ship missing stays whilst tacking, and, in addition, the British ships showed superior sailing qualities.

Des Touches, finding he could not retain the windward position, shaped course to the south-east in single line ahead, and Arbuthnot replied by turning to the same course. The weather had, in the meantime, changed for the worse. The wind had risen and a considerable sea was running. Des Touches soon found that he was being overtaken, and wore round in succession so as to pass his opponent on opposite tacks. (Diagram No. 14.) This placed him definitely in the leeward position, but he accepted the disadvantage, as he knew that the high sea and wind would heel over ships to windward to such an extent that their lower deck gun ports could not be opened.

Arbuthnot's reply was to stand on and then wear round in succession, so as to bring his ships in a position to bear down on their opposite numbers in the enemy line.

Shortly after 2 P.M. his van ships steered down for the enemy's van and received a heavy raking fire which crippled them. (Diagram No. 15.) The centre came into action a little later, but no signal was made for close action and the ships did not attack simultaneously. Des Touches took advantage of this indecision and wore round in succession, his whole line delivering broadsides at the three British ships in the van as they passed.

Arbuthnot tried to follow, but two of his van ships were incapable of movement, and, realising that his signal to wear could not be obeyed, he abandoned the pursuit and shaped course as

<sup>1</sup> Arbuthnot's Despatch, '*Royal Oak*, Lynnhaven Bay, March 20, 1781.'

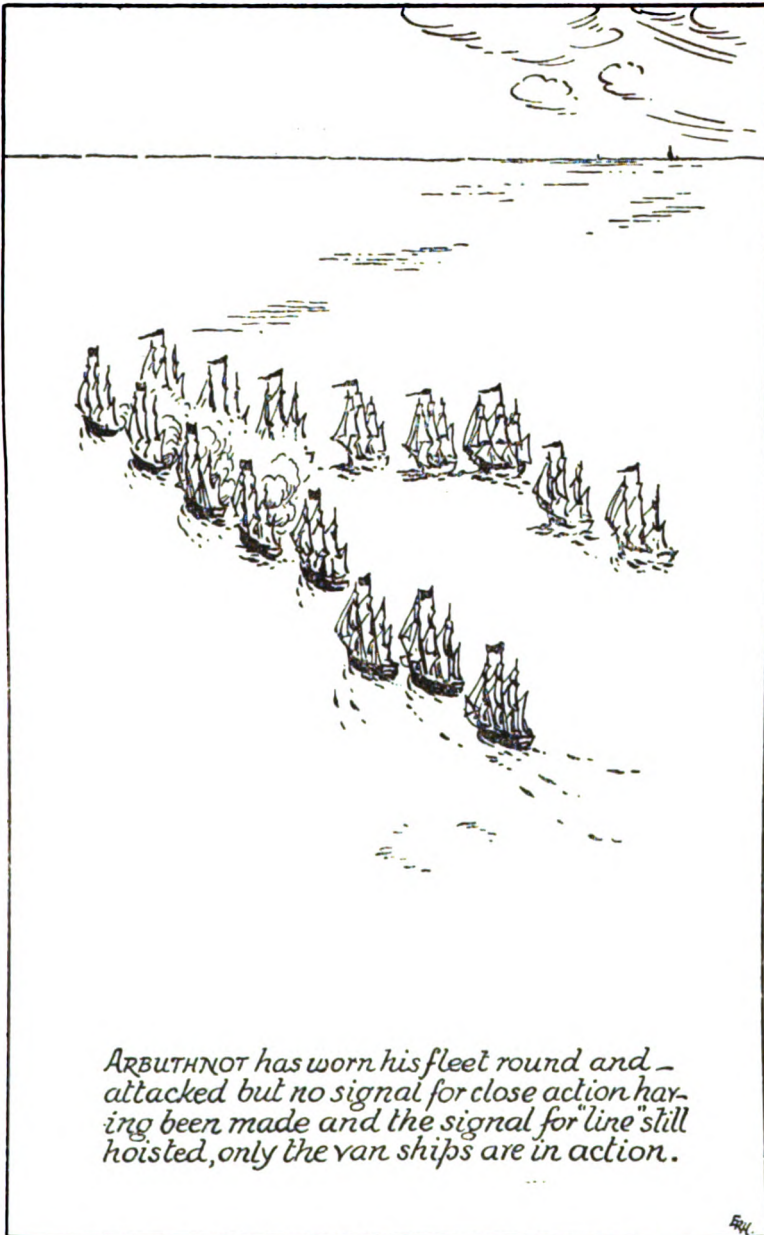


DIAGRAM 15.—BATTLE OF CAPE HENRY, MARCH 16TH, 1781, 2 P.M.

T



1781 soon as possible, for the Chesapeake to 'intercept the enemy should they attempt to get in there.'<sup>1</sup> Des Touches returned to Newport.

Arbuthnot had prevented the enemy carrying out an offensive in the Chesapeake, but at the price of his reputation as a sea commander. That he was not dissatisfied with the result of the action is evident from his despatch. 'By 3 o'clock the French line was broken, their ships began soon after to wear and to form their line again with their heads to the south-east into the ocean. I cannot but regret the early flight of the enemy prevented the action from becoming general.'<sup>1</sup> He was severely criticised by contemporaries for his failure to hoist the signal for close action. He was either obsessed with the necessity of keeping his ships in a correct line or did not realise the consequences of keeping the signal for line of battle flying at the masthead. But the blame was not his alone. His captains could affirm that they obeyed their Admiral's orders implicitly, but could not reply to a charge of showing lack of initiative and offensive spirit.

Des Touches manœuvred his squadron with skill, and, though his force was inferior in gun-power, had the best of the exchanges, as he sailed away with his ships in efficient condition, whilst Arbuthnot was immobilised when firing ceased. But he failed to take full advantage of his success, and, like many other French commanders, considered he had 'done enough,' when he had disabled part of his opponent's force.

In view of the state of Arbuthnot's squadron, of which des Touches must have been well aware, there was nothing to prevent the French fleet sailing into the Chesapeake and upsetting the whole of the British plans. A letter written by Commodore de Barras, who succeeded des Touches in command, is evidence of French naval opinion of the day—'As to the advantage which the English obtained in fulfilling their object that is a necessary consequence of their superiority and still more of their purely defensive attitude: it is a principle in war that one should risk much to defend one's position and very little to attack those of the enemy. M. des Touches, whose object was purely offensive, could and should, when the enemy opposed him with superior

<sup>1</sup> Arbuthnot's Despatch, 'Royal Oak, Lynnhaven Bay, March 20, 1781.'

forces, renounce a project which could no longer succeed unless, 1781  
contrary to all probability, it ended not only in beating but also  
in destroying entirely that superior squadron.' <sup>1</sup> Strange thoughts  
and a strange 'principle of war.' England was fortunate in her  
enemy at a moment when superior forces were everywhere closing  
round her.

The failure of the expedition was a great blow to Washington,  
whose army was in a very bad state through lack of food, clothing,  
and medical stores, and he wrote despairingly—' If France delays  
timely aid now it will avail us nothing if she attempt it hereafter.  
We are at the end of our tether and now or never our deliverance  
must come.' <sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Clinton, anxious for the safety of Arnold, had  
embarked 2,000 troops at New York as a reinforcement and, as  
soon as the coast was clear, the transports sailed for Lynnhaven  
Bay.

Major-General Phillips was in command and his orders were  
to effect a junction with Arnold, harry the surrounding country  
as a diversion in favour of Cornwallis, and establish a post to  
command the entrance to the Chesapeake. This represented a  
still further dispersion of force when the issue depended entirely  
on the struggle for control of the sea lines of communication.  
Phillips's force carried out a number of small operations and  
eventually arrived at Petersburg to await the coming of Cornwallis.

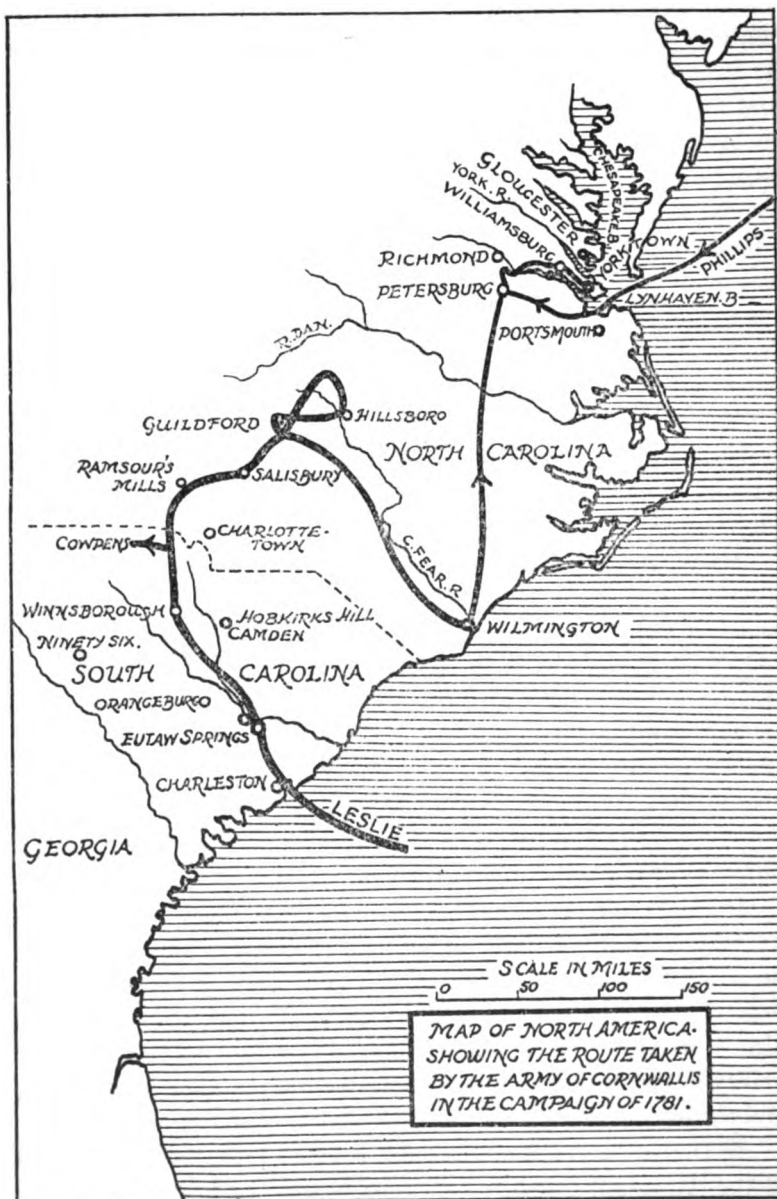
We must now retrace our steps and follow Cornwallis's move-  
ments from the beginning of the campaigning season.

It will be remembered that his more ambitious plans had been  
frustrated by the activity of the enemy guerilla bands, and that  
he had taken up a position at Winnsborough in October 1780. 1780  
Sumter and another American leader, Marion, never allowed Oct.  
him a moment's peace, and though Tarleton displayed great  
ability in countering their operations, he was not always successful,  
and in November suffered a reverse at the hands of Sumter. Nov.

In December new and more able soldiers appeared in command Dec.  
of the American forces. Nathaniel Greene replaced Gates, and

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

<sup>2</sup> Washington, *Works*, viii. 7.



MAP XIV.

he brought as assistants the clever Polish engineer, Kosciusko, Daniel Morgan, Henry Lee, and William Washington. Thanks to the energy of these men Greene was soon in command of 2,000 well equipped men at Charlottetown. 1780

By the middle of December Leslie's force had joined Cornwallis, and early in January the Army of about 2,000 men commenced to march north. Cornwallis never informed Clinton of his intentions and the reason for this serious omission must be credited to Germain. Germain had lost faith in Clinton and, believing that Cornwallis's star was in the ascendancy, had adopted the extraordinary course of communicating direct with the Commander of the southern force. 1781 Jan.

As Cornwallis advanced he was harried by Marion and Sumter, and Greene soon began to add to his difficulties by using his force to assist in the flank attacks. He was eventually compelled to strike back, and he ordered the indefatigable Tarleton to attack Daniel Morgan's force, which had been operating on his left flank.

On the 17th of January Tarleton overtook Morgan at Cowpens and the latter accepted battle with his back to the Broad River. Morgan placed his best marksmen in front and concealed his cavalry in rear. Tarleton attacked with his infantry and, though Morgan's marksmen caused many casualties, they succeeded in forcing their way through the first line. The British cavalry then charged but were met by superior numbers and driven back. Jan. 17

Tarleton next attempted to turn the enemy's right flank. Morgan countered the movement, but at the same time a part of his line retreated some distance without orders. The British saw their chance and advanced rapidly, but they were not in good order, and were stopped by a heavy fire from the enemy, who had in the meantime re-formed. Tired from long marching, they were unable to face the well-directed volleys that were poured into their ranks and they broke. Tarleton ordered the cavalry to charge, but they failed him in the hour of need and galloped from the battlefield. He then personally led an attack to save his guns, but it was too late as the gunners, who had displayed the

1781 greatest bravery, had all been killed. There was nothing to be done except retreat with what was left of his force.

The American loss was 72 killed and wounded ; the British nearly 800.

Cornwallis, when he heard of the battle, was some distance to the south-east and he at once hurried north-west in the hopes of coming up with Morgan, but the latter was too quick for him and he eventually halted at Ramsour's Mills without seeing any signs of the enemy.

Events were turning out badly for him. Tarleton's losses in men represented a serious weakening of his force. He had staked everything on the success of his offensive to the north, and had ordered the destruction of the fortifications at Charleston. Notwithstanding the setback he determined to push forward at all costs and bring the Americans to action.

Feb. Greene's strategy was to draw Cornwallis further and further into the country, and by the first week in February the British force was at Salisbury, and the Americans five days' march ahead of them. Greene eventually crossed the Dan River with the British close on his heels, but, as usual, just too late, and Cornwallis, calling off the pursuit, retired to Hillsborough. Towards the end of February he took up a position near Guildford, and early in March Greene reappeared, this time with a much larger force of over 4,000 men.

Mar. 15 On the 15th of March Cornwallis moved forward to attack with about 2,000 men, leaving a small force to guard his camp. Greene, like Morgan, placed his picked shots in the front line, and threw his right and left flanks forward. His main force was drawn up in a well-chosen position behind. The British advanced stubbornly, and the American centre did not stand to meet them, but the sharpshooters on their flanks caused a large number of casualties. The British flanks were then turned outwards, and, by hard fighting, Cornwallis's men gradually forced the American second line back and compelled its right flank to give way.

As soon as the right of the American second line was defeated, the way was clear for the British left to advance against Greene's prepared position near Guildford Court-house. The first attack

was hurled back with great loss. Reinforcements were hurried forward and a second attack launched, which forced back the enemy's first line, but was broken up by a cavalry charge. Once more the British line was reinforced, and this time, aided by Tarleton's cavalry, the attack got home and the enemy were driven from their position. 1781

Pursuit was out of the question. Cornwallis's men had fought magnificently against an enemy of twice their numbers, commanded by an able General, and deployed for battle on carefully selected ground. They had marched twelve miles to the attack, and had suffered for a long time from shortage of food.

Guildford was only a victory in name. Greene had retired, and his men had to a great extent dispersed to their homes, but Cornwallis, owing to heavy casualties and the impossibility of feeding his army, was compelled to forgo any further operations and retreated down the Cape Fear River to Wilmington, where he arrived on the 7th of April. April 7

Clinton, in the meantime, was quite in the dark as to what had happened, and, when the news of Guildford reached him, assumed that Cornwallis was master of the two Carolinas. On the 18th of April he wrote to Cornwallis that he wished to meet him, in order to arrange plans for the future, but the latter had already written, urging major operations in the Chesapeake. Clinton was opposed to operating away from New York so long as the sea line of communication was in dispute, and at this time the two Commanders were at loggerheads. Here the evil influence of Germain is evident, as Cornwallis, instead of sending his proposals to his Commander-in-Chief only, also sent them home to the Secretary for the Colonies. Clinton had actually given Cornwallis instructions that Charleston was on no account to be imperilled, but these instructions, and the safety of the garrisons in the Carolina posts, were all thrown to the wind, and on the 25th of April Cornwallis started out on the long march north to Petersburg, where he had planned to meet Phillips's force. We must leave him for a moment in order to follow the fortunes of the men he left behind. April 13 April 25

Rawdon, who had been left in command at Camden, soon

1781 found his lines of communication with Charleston threatened by  
April 19 Marion and Lee, and on the 19th of April Greene appeared before the town with 1,200 men, but did not feel strong enough to assault.

Instead, he took up a position at Hobkirk's Hill, about two  
April 25 miles away, and on the 25th Rawdon, with his 800 men, advanced to the attack.

Greene, unbeknown to Rawdon, had some guns with his force, and, as the British advanced, he opened a gap in his centre to allow the guns to pour their deadly grape into the closely formed ranks. He then attempted to encircle Rawdon by closing in his flanks and attacking with cavalry from the rear. Rawdon quickly countered this manœuvre by ordering his supports to strengthen his flanks, and the dangerous position was avoided. Good shooting and steadiness in the British line told in the end, and when some of the senior American officers were killed, Greene's men broke and retreated. Greene himself displayed great courage, and manned the drag ropes of one of the guns to set an example to his men.

Rawdon had won a very creditable victory, but Marion and Sumter harassed his line of communications and compelled him to fall back to a position thirty miles north of Charleston. In  
May the month of May all the British posts, except Ninety Six, fell to the enemy. Ninety Six was only saved by a piece of good  
June fortune. Greene and Kosciusko laid siege to it in June, and it was on the point of surrendering when Rawdon, having unexpectedly received a reinforcement of three regiments from England who should have joined Clinton at New York, arrived with a relief force.

Operations then ceased in the Carolinas on account of the heat, and the British force camped at Orangeburg. Rawdon's health broke down during the summer, and he handed over the command to Lieut.-Colonel Stuart.

Sept. 8 In September Greene returned to the attack once more, and on the 8th nearly effected a complete surprise. He captured a large number of Stuart's men who were foraging, and the troops in camp had only just time to take up a defensive position at Eutaw Springs before Greene attacked. Greene's force numbered

about 2,000, and Stuart's about 1,800. The Americans advanced with great determination and succeeded in forcing the British line back beyond their camp. They then stopped to plunder, and gave the British their chance to recover the position. A heavy fire soon caused the plunderers to retire again, and Greene withdrew his force. 1781

The casualties were very high. The British lost, in killed, wounded and prisoners, no fewer than 29 officers and 664 men, and the Americans approximately the same. Stuart then withdrew to Charleston Neck, and the fight for the Carolinas was over. All the energy, lives and money that had been spent by the British in their endeavour to conquer the two provinces was so much waste from the day Cornwallis set out to the north and left the weakly held posts behind him.

To return now to Cornwallis. The long march was completed on the 20th of May, when he joined forces with Arnold at Petersburg. May 20  
Phillips had died a few days before.

Clinton, having heard of Cornwallis's arrival at Wilmington, had embarked a force of 1,700 men as reinforcements, never dreaming that the Carolinas had been left to their fate. He was fully alive to what such abandonment meant, and we can imagine his feelings when he finally learned that Cornwallis was in Virginia. But he was not a strong enough man to order his subordinate to return to Charleston.

Lafayette, with a small force, was known to be in camp at Richmond, and Cornwallis put his force in motion at the end of May to attack him. But Lafayette was not to be caught, and he retired before the superior force. Cornwallis then returned down the river, and whilst on the march, received a peremptory order from Clinton to take up a defensive position at Williamsburg and Yorktown, and send every man he could spare to New York.

Clinton had gathered from an intercepted letter that it was Washington's intention to attack New York in full force. Extracts from this letter, as we have seen, were despatched to Rodney, with the result that Hood made haste to move north and join Graves.

Cornwallis disobeyed the order. He wrote to Clinton requesting



1781 to be allowed to return to Charleston to safeguard the Carolina garrisons, and meantime, thinking he was not in sufficient strength to hold Yorktown, started to march to Portsmouth. Lafayette followed him, and a brisk fight occurred on the 6th of July.

Whilst on the march Cornwallis received a second peremptory order to send a large part of his force to New York at once, but at Portsmouth he found further letters telling him that he could keep the whole of his force. It was Germain who had caused this *volte-face*, for Clinton had just received definite commands from him that no troops were to be withdrawn from Virginia, and that the main operation was to be an advance to the north through that Colony.

These three men, Clinton, Cornwallis and Germain were all attempting to control the operations at the same time. No wonder they came to grief, no wonder Clinton became desperate and failed to do what he knew was right. Cornwallis, on expert advice, decided against the Portsmouth position, and returned to Yorktown, which he fortified. He also fortified Gloucester Aug. on the other side of the river, and by the end of August had concentrated all his force in these two posts.

It was the beginning of the end. The British army was divided and dependent on secure sea lines of communications, and the final moves were played out by the sea forces.

Arbuthnot had written to Sandwich in February, requesting to be relieved on account of ill-health, and he handed over the command to Rear-Admiral Thomas Graves early in July. The May 10 French command also changed hands on the 10th of May, when Comte de Barras, who had been appointed to succeed de Ternay, relieved des Touches of his temporary command.

Rochambeau's son, who had taken passage with de Barras, brought his father instructions from the French Government. The General was informed that de Grasse's fleet would arrive on the coast of America during the winter season, and was told to arrange a plan of campaign with Washington in which the Navy could co-operate. They accordingly met near Hartford on the May 20 20th of May to discuss future plans.

The alternatives were either to operate in Virginia or attack

New York. The attack on New York was the most attractive on account of the importance of the position, and the probable effect on the British dispositions. Clinton would certainly call on Cornwallis for assistance, and the pressure on the southern States would be removed. 1781

Washington and Rochambeau wrote jointly to de Grasse to this effect, and the former was anxious that the French fleet should appear off Sandy Hook to blockade or attack the British fleet.<sup>1</sup>

Though Rochambeau agreed to the proposals, he was really in favour of operating in Virginia, and he wrote privately to de Grasse, pointing out the difficulties of forcing a passage into New York Harbour and recommending Chesapeake Bay as the best area for combined operations. In the meantime the two generals agreed to put their armies in motion at once, make their junction on the banks of the Hudson, and come to a final decision as to their objective when letters were received from de Grasse. The junction was effected early in July, and they were shortly afterwards reinforced by 1,500 French troops who had arrived at Boston.

The British Naval Commander had received early intelligence of this reinforcement, but a squadron sent to cruise off the port had failed to sight the transports.

Washington then advanced, and Clinton, convinced an attack on New York was imminent, ordered Cornwallis to send him a reinforcement, but, as we have seen, these orders were countermanded.

The frigate *Concorde*, which had been sent south in June with despatches for de Grasse, returned in the middle of August with the Admiral's reply. His reply settled the objective of the allied army. New York was no longer the point of attack, and Washington and Rochambeau at once began to move towards the Chesapeake.

On the 19th of July Graves received despatches from the July 19 Admiralty, informing him that a large convoy was leaving France towards the end of June, carrying money, clothing and military

<sup>1</sup> Washington to Greene, June 1, 1781 (Washington's Writings, edited by Sparks).

1781 stores for the enemy's army. He was directed to take measures to intercept this convoy, and he sailed from Sandy Hook on the  
July 21 21st with six of the line. He also issued orders for stationing frigates along the coast to look out for the French fleet expected from the West Indies.

It is interesting to note that, at this critical time, he detailed ships to convoy 'mast ships' and storeships from Halifax to New York, as cordage, rigging, stores and provisions were urgently required at the latter port.

July 27 On the 27th the sloop, which Rodney had sent off as soon as he knew de Grasse had definitely sailed westwards, arrived at New York with her vitally important despatches. Graves being at sea, the senior naval officer opened the letter, took a copy, and hurried the sloop off to find the Admiral. But the letter never reached Graves, as the Captain of the sloop, oblivious to the importance of his mission, went in chase of a privateer and brought her to action. He took her, but was himself taken immediately afterwards by three other privateers.

Misfortune also attended a brig which had been sent by Hood to Graves with a letter announcing his early arrival at New York. She was captured and taken into Philadelphia.

Graves was thus cruising on the look out for a French convoy, in complete ignorance of the real state of affairs. But he evidently realised that the times were critical, as he wrote to Rodney on the 2nd of July that he was apprehensive of a strong enemy concentration. Failing to sight the convoy he returned to Sandy  
Aug. 16 Hook, anchoring there on the 16th of August. He then read the duplicate of the sloop's letter, but still did not know Hood was on his way north.

Five days earlier Clinton received a very welcome reinforcement in the shape of 2,500 German troops, and the Admiral found him eager to carry out a joint operation against Rhode Island and de Barras's fleet. This plan had been discussed between the two commanders before, and Graves had agreed to co-operate when the idea was first broached, but now he withdrew the offer on the plea that one of his ships had to be refitted and one remasted. It is not easy to judge this matter now, but perhaps

if Graves had been the same stamp of man as Howe, the ships 1781  
would have been rendered sufficiently seaworthy for the expedition, and Clinton would have had his way. A successful attack at Rhode Island might have had far reaching results.

Hood, with his fourteen of the line, anchored outside the harbour on the 28th, having seen nothing of the enemy. A Aug. 28  
frigate he had sent on ahead arrived shortly before him, and gave Graves the first information of his presence. Realising that the times were critical, Hood did not take his squadron into harbour, but went up by boat to see his senior officer. At Long Island he found Graves and Clinton discussing the Rhode Island project, and at once urged the Admiral to move his ships across the bar, so that they would be ready to sail either to Rhode Island or to look for the enemy at sea.

Graves had arranged for pilots to bring Hood's squadron into harbour. as he did not consider the ships were safe, 'exposed to an enemy as well as to the violence of the sea,'<sup>1</sup> but his junior's strong representations prevailed, and he gave orders for his own ships to proceed out of harbour. Junction was effected with Hood on the 31st. Aug. 31

At this time, the British Commanders had no apprehensions that the sea line of communications were threatened by a superior force. Rodney was convinced that de Grasse would convoy the homeward-bound trade from Cap François with a strong squadron, and only detach twelve or fourteen ships to North America. Hood's secretary wrote to Middleton on the 29th of August:—  
'Our previous arrival on the coast will operate greatly in our favour as it will not only effectually enable the commanders-in-chief to counteract the motions of the enemy, but will also allow of their adopting such measures as will be most efficacious towards preventing a junction of their squadrons. . . . From the state of the French fleet in the West Indies, I imagine they will not venture to detach more than twelve sail.'<sup>2</sup>

Graves wrote to Hood on the day the fleet arrived from the

<sup>1</sup> Graves to Hood, 'London, Sandy Hook, August 28, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Hunt to Middleton, 'Barfleur, Sandy Hook, August 29, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

1781 south. 'No Intelligence as yet of De Grasse. Accounts say that he has gone to Havana to join the Spaniards. A little time will shew us. All the Americans accounts are big with expectation and the Army has lately crossed to the Southward of the Hudson and appears in motion in the Jerseys as if to threaten Staten Island. For my own part I believe the mountain in labour.' <sup>1</sup>

And to the Admiralty on the 30th. 'The *Richmond* came in on the 29th from the Chesapeake in four days where everything is quiet and I have had two frigates before the Delaware for some time past. Whether the French intend a junction or whether they have left the coast is only to be guessed at.' <sup>2</sup>

Clinton was all along assured of British naval supremacy.

Aug. 31 All doubts as to whether to proceed with the expedition against Rhode Island or put to sea and search for the enemy were dispelled on the 31st, when certain intelligence was received that de Barras had sailed on the 25th. Graves immediately weighed and shaped course for the Chesapeake, as he felt certain de Barras was bound south. The latter had a free hand in his orders, as de Grasse had written from Cap François to tell him he could either join the main fleet at the Chesapeake or operate on the North American coast.

But though de Grasse had not ordered a concentration, Washington and Rochambeau were bent on bringing everything possible to bear on their objective. De Barras, apprehensive of moving south whilst the British fleet was between him and the Chesapeake, had proposed an expedition against Newfoundland, but Washington and Rochambeau strongly opposed this, and requested him to sail for the Chesapeake with artillery and the Rhode Island troops.

Like de Grasse, de Barras did not appreciate the value of a full concentration on the vital spot. 'Regret that my proposed expedition meets with such strong opposition from you,' he wrote to Rochambeau. 'I thought it, and still think it, to be more advantageous to the common cause than a junction with de Grasse,

<sup>1</sup> Enclosure to Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur* off Sandy Hook, August 30, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> Graves' Despatch, '*London* off Sandy Hook, August 30, 1781.'

which is considered useless by that Admiral himself, and he knows better than anyone else what forces he can bring to the coast, and what forces Rodney can take there. However, as the opinion of yourself and Washington is opposed to mine, I have decided to go to Chesapeake with my fleet, and bring your artillery and some transports. I must repeat, however, that this is dangerous, and I presume that de Grasse understands its disadvantages, as he has given me freedom not to join him at Chesapeake if I do not think it fit to do so. Graves' fleet, whatever it may be, will certainly not stop me. But, according to what Washington says, Digby may reinforce him, and general rumour says that Rodney may appear at any time. It is not 1,000 to 1 against my meeting with one or other of these squadrons; on the contrary, it is to be expected that the enemy, when they know I am at sea, will attempt to intercept my squadron and convoy. However, I will not hesitate to comply with the request of Washington and yourself.' <sup>1</sup>

Graves's fleet numbered nineteen sail of the line, and he fondly hoped that he was about to bring an overwhelming force against de Barras's small squadron of eight of the line.

In the meantime, Clinton had been much perplexed by Washington's movements. The expected attack on New York had not taken place, and the American army had commenced a movement to the southwards, but, when Graves sailed his mind was at rest, and he wrote to Cornwallis to tell him that there was nothing to fear, and that he intended to execute a diversionary operation to assist matters. This operation, which was conducted by Arnold and Captain Bazely of the *Amphion*, resulted in some losses to the enemy in Connecticut, but achieved no diversionary effect.

All this time the plan concocted by the American and French commanders was being steadily pursued, and Clinton, Cornwallis, Graves, and Hood little knew what was before them.

It will be remembered that de Grasse arrived at Cap François on the 16th of July. There he received the letters from Washington and Rochambeau, and in view of 'the critical situation and

July 16

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Chevalier in *Histoire de la Marine Française*.

1781 the necessity for the prompt assistance requested by Rochambeau,'<sup>1</sup> decided to proceed with his whole force to the Chesapeake. Amongst his ships were ten of the line which had been in West Indian waters for a long time, and he had received orders from the Minister to send these home as escort to the convoy, but, determined to operate with all his force, he disregarded the orders and postponed the sailing of the convoy. He also embarked 8,000 troops and a number of guns, and at once sent back the *Concorde* with letters to Washington, Rochambeau and de Barras, giving his intentions, but leaving de Barras a free hand.

Washington agreed with his proposals, and wrote back on the 17th of August :

'In consequence of the despatches received from your Excellency by the frigate *Concorde*, it has been judged expedient to give up, for the present, the enterprise against New York, and turn our attention towards the south, with a view, if we should not be able to attempt Charleston itself, to recover and secure the States of Virginia, North Carolina, and the country of South Carolina and Georgia. For this purpose we have determined to remove the whole of the French army, and as large a detachment of the American as can be spared, to the Chesapeake, to meet your Excellency there.'<sup>2</sup>

Spanish pilots were obtained to assist in navigating through the old Bahama Canal, and the fleet anchored in Lynnhaven Bay at the entrance to the Chesapeake on the 30th of August. The troops were at once sent up river to join Lafayette, whilst ships were ordered to close the mouth of the York River and anchor in the James River to prevent Cornwallis escaping into North Carolina.

Sept. 5 Graves arrived off the Chesapeake on the 5th of September. At 8 A.M. a French look-out frigate reported him, and de Grasse hoped it was de Barras's squadron that had been sighted. About 10 A.M. a British frigate made the signal, 'enemy in sight,' and Graves also hoped it was de Barras. But by 11 A.M. the British Admiral 'had discovered a number of great ships at anchor

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

<sup>2</sup> Washington's Writings, edited by Sparks.



DIAGRAM 16.—BATTLE OFF THE CHESAPEAKE, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1781, 2.15 P.M.

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1781 ' which seemed to be extended across the extreme of the Chesapeake from Cape Henry to the Middle Ground.' <sup>1</sup> The wind was N.N.E., and the weather fair.

By noon the ebb tide was making and the French fleet <sup>2</sup> began to move out of the harbour in a straggling line, as many of the ships had to tack several times before they could clear the entrance.

Graves was in a position almost beyond the wildest dreams of a sea-commander. His whole fleet was running down before the wind, and his enemy was before him, working slowly out of harbour. He had only to fall on their van with full force and the day was his.

Instead, he formed his fleet on an east and west line at 1 P.M., which brought it parallel to such of the enemy's ships as had cleared the entrance, but on the opposite tack.

At 2.18 P.M., Graves made the signal to wear together, as his van was approaching the Middle Ground Shoal, and this brought his fleet to an easterly course with Drake in the van and Hood in the rear. (Diagram No. 16.)

The French fleet was then about three miles to leeward, with their van ship abreast the British centre, and Graves decided to heave to to allow the French line to draw further ahead.

At 2.30 he determined to attack, and made the signal for his leading ship to lead more to starboard, with the result that the lines approached one another at an angle.

At 3.46 'judging that the van would be able to operate.' <sup>1</sup> he hoisted the signal to 'bear down and engage the enemy,' and the broadsides of the leading ships at once opened but the remainder of the van only came into action one by one. (Diagram No. 17.)

Hood, and other credible witnesses, affirmed afterwards that the signal for 'line of battle' was kept flying throughout the action. Whilst this signal was displayed, ships were expected to keep station on a line drawn from the van ship through the flagship. But, by the log of the flagship, the signal was hauled down at 4.11 and rehoisted at 4.22 as 'the ships were not sufficiently

<sup>1</sup> Graves' Despatch, 'London at sea, September 14, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix XXII.

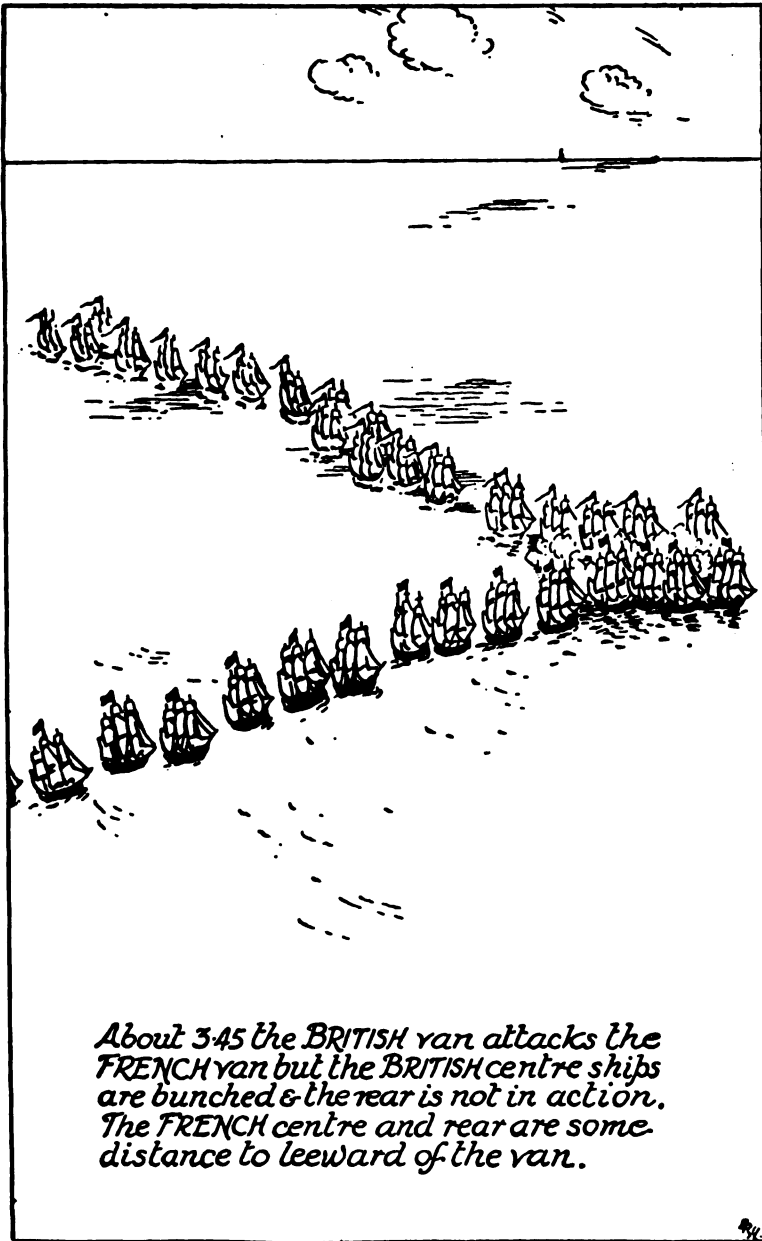


DIAGRAM 17.—BATTLE OFF THE CHESAPEAKE, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1781. 3.45 P.M.

1781 extended.' In other words, Graves, finding his ships were 'bunching,' had recourse to a signal which, whilst it might result in clearing the bunch, could be easily misunderstood by his second in command and captains.

The French centre and rear had not been able to work up to windward, and, seeing his van unsupported, de Grasse ordered his leading ships to steer further off the wind, in order to form a proper line of battle. This had the effect of breaking off the action, and firing ceased shortly after sunset.

A great opportunity had been lost. Hood's remarks, on the action were much to the point. 'Our centre then upon a wind began to engage at the same time, but at a most improper distance (and the *London* had the signal for close action flying, as well as the signal for the line ahead at half a cable was under her top-sail . . .), and our rear being barely within random shot did not fire while the signal for the line was flying.'<sup>1</sup>

He then comments on the fact that the second and third ships astern of the flagship received little or no damage, which proved that the centre was never properly engaged.

'Now, had the centre gone to the support of the van, and the signal for the line being hauled down, or the commander-in-chief had set the example for close action, even with the signal for the line flying, the van of the enemy must have been cut to pieces, and the rear division of the British fleet would have been opposed to those ships the centre division fired at, and at the proper distance for engaging, or the Rear-Admiral who commanded it would have a great deal to answer for. Instead of that, our centre division did the enemy but little damage, and the rear ships being barely within random shot, three only fired a few shots. So soon as the signal for the line was hauled down at twenty-five minutes after five, the rear division bore up, above half a mile to leeward of the centre division, but the French ships bearing up also, it did not near them. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

Hood's remarks have been quoted in full because this action,

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur off the Delaware, September 16, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. iii).

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Jackson, Coast of Virginia, September 6, 1781 (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

in which only the van ships fought one another, was the decisive battle of the war, and is one of great historical importance. 1781

In the later stages one signal ruined everything. The signal for the 'line of battle' was one that none of the commanding officers were prepared to disobey. It was flying at an important moment of the action period, with the result that the Captains were giving their attention to keeping their correct position relative to the flagship, instead of to seeking out and attacking enemy ships.

Graves had two golden opportunities to bring a superior force to bear on the enemy; at the outset when the French fleet was working out of harbour in disorder, and later on when their van was out of supporting distance from their centre and rear. By ordering his van ship to lead towards the enemy and the remainder to follow in succession, he lost all advantage of holding the windward position. Holding that position, he could have delivered a full-force blow if the ships had been manœuvred so as to fall on the enemy together, and not, as they did, piecemeal.

But, despite this obvious reason for the tactical failure, it is somewhat surprising that neither Hood, nor those captains whose ships were to windward and out of the fight, showed initiative at the critical moment.

It must have been evident to them how the battle was going, and that de Grasse would have great difficulty in supporting any ship or squadron attacked from to windward, but they made no attempt to seize the opportunity and were content to remain in their correct position in the line.

To what extent Graves was disconcerted or disappointed by the conduct of the officers in the rear ships we do not know, but that he was determined to profit by his unfortunate experience is evident from the memorandum he issued the day after the battle:

'When the signal for the line of battle ahead is out at the same time with the signal for battle, it is not to be understood that the latter signal shall be rendered ineffectual by a too strict adherence to the former. The signal for the line of battle ahead is to be considered as the line of extension for the fleet, and the

1781 respective admirals and captains of the fleet are desired to be attentive not to advance or fall back, so as to intercept the fire of their seconds ahead and astern, but to keep as near the enemy as possible whilst the signal for close action continues out ; and to take notice that the line must be preserved parallel to that of the enemy during battle, without regard to a particular point or bearing.'<sup>1</sup>

Hood wrote on the back of his copy :—

' It is the first time I ever heard it suggested that too strict an adherence could be paid to the line of battle ; and if I understand the meaning of the British fleet being formed parallel to that of the enemy, it is, that if the enemy's fleet is disorderly and irregularly formed, the British fleet is, in compliment to it, to form irregularly and disorderly also. Now, the direct contrary is my opinion ; and I think, in case of disorder or irregularity in the enemy's line, that the British fleet should be as compact as possible, in order to take the critical moment of an advantage opening and offering itself, to make a powerful impression on the most vulnerable part of the enemy. According to Mr. Graves's Memo., any captain may break the line with impunity when he pleases.'<sup>1</sup>

This, from Hood, is certainly surprising, and it is evident that at this time he was a believer in strict adherence to the letter of the law. If that memorandum of the 6th of September had been issued two days earlier, a very different turn might have been given to the course of events.

Graves wished to renew the action after the enemy had hauled off, and sent frigates ' to van and rear to push forward the line and keep it extended with the full intention to renew the engagement in the morning.'<sup>2</sup> but first the *Montagu*, then, one after the other, the *Shrewsbury*, *Terrible*, *Ajax*, and *London*, reported considerable damage and he realised he was not in a condition to do so.

Sept. 6 Next day it was calm, and the two fleets lay in sight of one another refitting. Graves sent for Drake and Hood, and discussed the situation. Hood was of opinion that the British fleet should

<sup>1</sup> N.R.S., vol. xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> Graves's Despatch, ' *London at sea*, September 14, 1781.'

make for the Chesapeake, but his view did not prevail. All Graves did was to order two frigates to go to the Chesapeake, cut the buoy ropes of the French squadron's anchors, and deliver a letter to Cornwallis. 1781

On the 7th and 8th de Grasse held the windward position but did not seek action. Of this period Graves wrote, 'We had not speed enough in so mutilated a state to attack them *had it been prudent*, and they showed no inclination to renew the action for they generally maintained the wind of us and had it often in their power.'<sup>1</sup> On the 9th the French fleet, profiting by a favourable wind, disappeared under a press of canvas on a course for the Chesapeake. Graves made no attempt to follow, nor did he order frigates to shadow. Hood was in great distress. He saw clearly that the only two courses of action for the British fleet were either to enter the Chesapeake first and deny the entrance to de Grasse, or bring de Grasse to action before he entered. But Graves ordered his squadron to take a contrary course and heave to. On the following day Hood ordered a frigate alongside and sent this letter to Graves. 'I flatter myself you will forgive the liberty I take in asking whether you have any knowledge where the French fleet is, as we can see nothing of it from the *Barfleur*. By the press of sail de Grasse carried yesterday, I am inclined to think his aim is the Chesapeake, in order to be strengthened by the ships there, either by adding them to his present force, or by exchanging his disabled ships for them. Admitting that to be his plan, will he not cut off the frigates you have sent to reconnoitre, as well as the ships you expect from New York. And if he should enter the Bay, which is by no means improbable, will he not succeed in giving most effectual succour to the rebels?'<sup>2</sup> Sept. 7-8 Sept. 9

On receipt of this letter Graves summoned Drake and Hood to a further conference, and Hood again pressed his opinion that the Chesapeake was the point to go for, but admitted that the favourable opportunity had by then probably been missed.

<sup>1</sup> Graves' Despatch, 'London at sea, September 14, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur off the Delaware, September 16, 1781,' Enclosure 2 (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

1781  
Sept. 11 Nothing was done till the evening of the 11th, when Graves shaped course for the Chesapeake and sent a frigate on to reconnoitre. The frigate in due course reported sighting the French fleet at anchor in the Chesapeake, and, as de Barras's squadron had now joined, they numbered thirty-six ships of the line. In this quandary, Graves turned to Hood for advice. On the Sept. 13 morning of the 13th he wrote :—' Admiral Graves presents his compliments to Sir Samuel Hood and begs leave to acquaint him that the *Medea* has just made the signal to inform him that the French fleet are at anchor above the Horse Shoe in the Chesapeake, and desires his opinion what to do with the fleet.' <sup>1</sup>

Hood replied, ' Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood presents his compliments to Rear-Admiral Graves. Is extremely concerned to find by his note just received that the French fleet is at anchor in the Chesapeake above the Horse Shoe, though it is no more than what he expected, as the press of sail the fleet carried on the 9th and in the night of the 8th made it very clear to him what de Grasse's intentions were. Sir Samuel would be very glad to send an opinion, but he really knows not what to say in the truly lamentable state we have brought ourselves.' <sup>1</sup>

A Council of War was then held, and it was decided that owing to the position of the enemy, the condition of the British ships, and the season of the year, it was impracticable to give ' effectual succour ' to Cornwallis. It was also decided that the fleet should go at once to New York to repair.

Sept. 19 The fleet anchored at Sandy Hook on the 19th, and Cornwallis's fate was sealed.

Sept. 24 On the 24th Clinton called a conference, at which it was agreed to make one last effort to relieve the beleagured army. It was ' the opinion of the Army that no diversion which they could make by land would afford relief to Lord Cornwallis, and that, unless the Navy could land them in York or James River, they saw little probability before them.' <sup>2</sup> But the repairs of the squadron took longer than was expected. ' The whole fleet are as busy as they

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, ' *Barfleur* off the Delaware, September 16, 1781,' Enclosure 3 (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

<sup>2</sup> Graves' Despatch, ' *London* off Sandy Hook, September 26, 1781.'

can be,' wrote Graves, 'but I am very apprehensive that so much 1781  
 as is wanted to the fleet, such a poverty of every kind of stores and  
 provisions, and so much to do for the Army afterwards, will con-  
 sume more time than was expected.' <sup>1</sup> Though Clinton had 6,000  
 men ready to embark and all were working hard for the relief  
 expedition, Graves called a Council of War on the 7th of October, Oct. 7  
 and put this question :—'Whether it was practicable to relieve  
 Lord Cornwallis in the Chesapeake.' He received a very curt  
 reply from Hood.

All was ready by the 18th, and on the 19th the relief expedi- Oct. 19  
 tion sailed. The fleet and transports arrived off the Chesapeake  
 on the 24th, only to find that they were too late. There was Oct. 24  
 nothing to be done but return to New York, and think out what  
 Washington and de Grasse would do next.

Washington had arrived at Lafayette's headquarters at  
 Williamsburg on the 14th of September. By the 26th his army, Sept. 14  
 16,000 strong, was assembled and ready to march. Two days Sept. 26  
 later Yorktown was invested. On the 29th Cornwallis received Sept. 28  
 a heartening message from Clinton that he might shortly expect a Sept. 29  
 reinforcement of 5,000 troops and twenty-six ships of the line.  
 These, as we have seen, did not arrive in time.

On the 9th of October the enemy batteries opened, and on Oct. 9  
 the 14th two of the principal redoubts were carried by storm. Oct. 14  
 A sortie under Lieut.-Colonel Abercrombie was gallantly carried  
 out, but proved of little advantage. It was soon evident that,  
 if the besieging force were undisturbed in their operations, sur-  
 render was only a matter of time. Cornwallis then made an  
 attempt to pass his troops across the river to Gloucester, but a  
 violent storm of rain and wind drove them back.

On the 19th, having no serviceable guns left, and with troops Oct. 19  
 shattered by wounds and sickness, Cornwallis capitulated. The  
 number that surrendered was 7,600 of whom 2,000 were hospital  
 cases.

With the disaster at Yorktown, the military operations of the  
 year came to an end, and, with the approach of winter, the rival  
 fleets prepared for their voyage to the West Indies. Washington

<sup>1</sup> Graves's Despatch, 'London, off Sandy Hook, September 26th, 1781.'



1781 urged de Grasse to complete the campaign with a joint attack on Charleston, but the Admiral replied that his instructions compelled him to return to his station.

Rear-Admiral the Hon. Robert Digby, with three ships of the line, had arrived at Sandy Hook on the 25th of September to take  
 Nov. 3 over command of the North American Station. On the 3rd of November he gave Hood orders to take command of the ships  
 Nov. 11 he had brought from the West Indies, and on the 11th Hood sailed south with eighteen of the line. Before sailing he tried hard to persuade Digby to let him take all the line-of-battle ships to the West Indies. He was confident that the next round would be fought out in tropical waters and, furthermore, the larger ships on the American coast would be immobilised during the winter. But Digby refused. For a newly arrived Commander-in-Chief to at once allow a junior officer to take all his ships away was perhaps expecting too much of human nature. Hood evidently thought it was prize money that was influencing Digby, and wrote a letter offering to share everything with him. But this did not produce the hoped for result.

Digby's reasons for retaining the ships are not convincing. 'I intend to strengthen the (Hood's) squadron with four or five of His Majesty's ships under my command reserving two or three line of battleships till I know what Monsieur de Grasse does, as he probably will be governed by what separation we make. This will give Sir Samuel Hood a superiority of coppered ships and an equality of fleet whilst the French keep together.'<sup>1</sup>

Dec. 5 Hood anchored at Barbados on the 5th of December, and soon learnt that de Grasse was at Port Royal with thirty sail of the line, and that four of the line had been detached to escort the trade home from Cap François, where it had been waiting since the fleet had sailed for operations in the Chesapeake.

The two Admirals were once more within striking distance of one another, and it was not long before the din of battle again disturbed the peaceful tropical waters.

The North American campaign of 1781 is of eternal interest, for the indirect outcome of the operations was the birth of the United States of America. The period of hostilities down to

<sup>1</sup> Digby's Despatch, 'Prince George, Sandy Hook, November 7, 1781.'

the battle off the Chesapeake was the period of labour. After that battle, which was, indeed, little more than a skirmish, British opposition to the wishes of the Colonists melted away. 1781

Yorktown has often been described as one of the 'decisive battles of the world,' but it was the naval skirmish off the Chesapeake that was decisive. The tactical failure of the day has been described, and need not be further dwelt on. The strategical aspect presents several points of interest.

The French concentrated full force on the decisive point. De Grasse proved himself equal to the situation. Convinced that with his co-operation Washington could deal a vital blow, he did not hesitate to disregard his orders from home. But it was Washington and Rochambeau, not de Grasse, who realised that the situation demanded the concentration of every ship and every man and, in requesting de Barras to move south, they showed great strategical foresight.

The British force was not at full strength. Not only did Graves have four ships away on detached service at the supreme moment, but two ships had been detained at Jamaica in direct disobedience of Rodney's orders. Rodney saw clearly what the British strategy should be. He had impressed on Graves and Hood the importance of concentrating, and concentrating at the vital point off the Capes of Virginia. He had been compelled to detach two ships as escort to a convoy from the Windward Islands to Jamaica, but had given implicit instructions that the all-important object was the greatest possible concentration of ships. Rodney said afterwards that, if he had been in command of the fleet that arrived off the Chesapeake after the surrender, he would have blockaded the French fleet in.

Cornwallis may have been too impetuous, Clinton may have been weak in not giving definite orders to Cornwallis, Germain may have been more wrong-headed than ever, but, allowing all that, the victory in the end was to the holder of the sea line of communications. From the day Clinton divided his forces on the American seaboard the success of the campaign depended on the sea forces. From the day de Grasse appeared in the Western Atlantic the British operations were doomed, if the Frenchman was a leader of skill and determination. The situation could

1781 only be met by a counter-concentration under a leader of equal or greater capability.

If Graves had seen through the eyes of Hood or Rodney, things might have turned out differently. Even after the unsuccessful action, final victory probably rested with the fleet that first entered the Chesapeake. A fleet drawn up in a defensive position was a hard nut to crack. Howe had proved this early in the war, Barrington had proved it later on in the West Indies, Hood was to prove it the next year. But Graves was not the man for such critical times. At no period in her history has England so felt the want of a first-class sea-commander in the vital area.

Some men are slow to learn even by experience, and the very last act of the campaign was the refusal of Digby to allow Hood to take every available ship south to challenge de Grasse in the West Indies. It may have been pride, prize-money, or selfishness, but it was not war.

In every struggle there comes a moment when one of the rival commanders begins to impose his will on his opponent. It may take a very long time. It may be from the outset. But the moment always arrives and can be detected. Wolfe and Montcalm planned and executed operations against one another at Quebec for a long time before either attained a psychological superiority, but a moment arrived when Montcalm's movements became dependent on those of his opponent and from that moment he was a defeated man.

So it was with Clinton and Washington. Up to a short time before Yorktown it was always Clinton and Cornwallis who planned offensive operations, whilst Washington and his generals did their best to hamper the execution of their projects, yielding here, advancing there, attacking with guerilla bands. Neither had established a superiority. Neither was definitely imposing his will on the other. But the psychological moment came when Washington and Rochambeau joined forces and Clinton was set wondering what they were going to do. From the day the British Commander-in-Chief ceased to work out offensive plans for himself, and thought only of what the enemy was doing, the initiative passed out of his hands and then the campaign was lost.

## CHAPTER XIX

### EUROPEAN WATERS, 1781

WHILST these stirring events were taking place in the Western Atlantic, there was considerable activity in Home and Mediterranean waters. 1781

After the failure of the French attack on Jersey in 1779, steps had been taken to strengthen the defences of the Channel Islands, but, despite this precaution, an expedition of about 2,000 men under Baron de Rullecourt effected a complete surprise early in January, and captured the town of St. Heliers. The Baron had been second in command to the Prince of Nassau in the previous attempt, and so knew the ground well. The Lieutenant-Governor and a number of leading citizens were made prisoners, and de Rullecourt drew up terms for capitulation. The Governor at first refused to sign, but on de Rullecourt threatening to pillage the town, he gave way. Jan.

But there was a British garrison of about 2,000, including a number of invalids, who were determined to fight it out. The principal position occupied by the garrison was a fortress known as Elizabeth Castle, and de Rullecourt sent forward a letter demanding surrender, which met with a very proper reply. Major Pierson, the British commander, organised his troops and advanced to attack, but he had not gone far when a messenger arrived from the unfortunate Lieutenant-Governor requesting him to desist and to capitulate, as the enemy were not only strong in the town, but were hourly expecting large reinforcements from St. Malo. But Pierson was not that type of man and continued his advance. After some street fighting, a white flag was waved, and the French General, who was mortally wounded, gave himself up. Pierson was also killed in the fighting.

1781 This second attempt on the Channel Islands nearly succeeded owing to the skilful use of surprise, and only the determination of Major Pierson saved the situation. The Lieutenant-Governor was court-martialled and dismissed his office.

We must now turn to examine the operations of the fleets based on European ports.

Disagreement between the Allies made the task of the Grand fleet under Darby much easier than it should have been. The French, aware of the power that lay in the superior combined fleet to control the English Channel, pressed their ally to join forces, but the Spaniards' eyes were on Gibraltar. The French Ambassador at Madrid wrote to de Castries on the 24th of April: 'Spain's latest decision is absolutely contrary to a junction of the forces of the two nations in Europe. However disagreeable this decision may be, I am passing it on as promptly as I can; I know how important it is that you should know on what you can count. I have foreseen this issue for a long while past.'<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this decision Darby was soon charged with a more important task than attacking enemy commerce, as Gibraltar was feeling the pinch of blockade.

The stores Rodney had landed early in 1780 were long since exhausted, and as far back as October the garrison had been on short rations. Once more we read in the price list: 'Small hen—nine shillings, an ox's head—£1 7 0, sucking pigs—two guineas,' and in addition fuel was very scarce. Public clamour urged on the Government to make an effort to succour the fortress, and early in the year preparations for relief began with the assembling of a large number of victuallers at Cork to load salted provisions. Ships were also collected at Spithead to load coal, ordnance, and naval stores.

Mar. 13 The sending of a relief force gave the opportunity to protect convoys bound for the West Indies, East Indies, and North America, whilst they were passing by the enemy's main ports, and on the 13th of March Darby sailed from Spithead with twenty-eight of the line and a great convoy. He first called at Cork to pick up the victuallers and, but for this divergence from his

<sup>1</sup> French National Archives B. 4, 189.

normal course for Gibraltar, he would probably have fallen in with de Grasse who, with a large convoy and twenty-six of the line, including Suffren's force for the East Indies, had cleared from Brest on the 22nd. The Admiralty was criticised in Parliament because the interception of de Grasse was not Darby's main object, but it is doubtful if intelligence of the intended movement of the French fleet was received in England. 1781

The various 'trade' convoys having parted company at selected positions, the British fleet, consisting of twenty-eight of the line, ten frigates, four fireships, and ninety-seven merchant vessels arrived off Cape Spartel on the 11th of April. It was sighted by some Spanish frigates, who hurried into Cadiz. They were followed by a British frigate, which reconnoitred the harbour and counted thirty-six of the line lying inside. April 11

On the 12th the first ships of the fleet arrived at Gibraltar, and the Spaniards simultaneously opened a terrific bombardment from their land guns, which caused a great deal of damage to the town. The enemy attempted to prevent the landing of supplies by attacking the relief force with a flotilla of twenty gunboats under the command of Don Bonaventura Moreno. The flotilla advanced daily from Algeciras to fire on the transports, and, though men-of-war were anchored in positions to check their activities, they continued to worry and annoy the shipping all the time unloading was being carried out. Despite this interference the fleet was ready for the homeward voyage by the 19th, and Darby weighed and shaped course to the westward. April 12

This second relief of the fortress is of strategical interest. Great Britain had to relieve Gibraltar or lose it, and only twenty-eight of the line were available to escort the victuallers and ordnance vessels. During passage the relief force had to pass by Brest and the principal Spanish ports. It was known that a large French fleet was in Brest, and that Cordova commanded over thirty of the line at Cadiz. Furthermore, the Allies were fully aware of the preparation of the expedition, and boasted that it would never reach its destination. But Cordova, despite the big fleet he commanded, was not a man to act alone. Earlier in the year the French pressed the Spaniards to come north. April 19

1781 When the Spaniards heard of the relief expedition, they pressed the French to come south. If the Allies had been working in harmony, a French fleet would have been sent to join Cordova for operations against the British relief force. It was a wonderful chance. With the defeat of the British Grand Fleet and the capture of that vast assemblage of merchant ships, not only would Gibraltar have fallen, but the war would have been ended with one blow.

Even without the French reinforcement, Cordova had his chance when his frigates reported the coming of Darby. He had been out cruising recently to practise his fleet, but at the vital moment he preferred to stay in harbour.

There is evidence that the personnel were suffering from the depression which results from inaction. The fear of facing the enemy shown by Cordova on previous occasions had infected their minds.

Supplies of money and provisions had not been forthcoming for some time.

'It is six months since the King has given me as much as a quarto,' wrote a subordinate officer, 'and he does not think of doing it. . . . Every evening I am ordered to take information to the Admiral as regards the daily happenings, and thus I am deprived of the sole means which are at my disposal to reduce my expenses, which is to remain on board ship . . . 22 millions have arrived and nevertheless there is not a real in the Naval Treasury nor any hope of receiving anything for a long while past. Orders have just been given to use the money in the convoy, which has lately been captured, to pay for provisions of the several Captains.'

The French Ambassador in Madrid, M. de Montmorin, expected nothing from Cordova's fleet.

'The Spanish fleet returned to Cadiz on the 27th,' he wrote to de Castries. 'I must confess that I am more easy knowing it to be there than if it was in the Straits. I was not at all anxious that it should meet with the British, and am much relieved to know that it is in safety. In the present circumstances a defeat would have the most disastrous consequences in every way. I

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Captain Duro, *Armada Española*.

am quite aware there is no glory in entering harbour when the enemy approaches, but at any rate there remain thirty battle-ships in fairly good condition, and if it becomes possible to direct them towards a good object we may still be able to make use of them.' <sup>1</sup>

There is also evidence that the authorities in Madrid were partly to blame for the inaction of the fleet. The strategy was discussed at length, and the opinion of one of the Admiralty advisers was as follows:—'It is neither advisable nor necessary that our fleet should attack that of the British, and even it would be disadvantageous to do it and advantageous to avoid it, for it is impossible to prevent the arrival of help to the besieged town, or to hinder, during the fight, the entrance of the frigates attending the convoy. . . . The King should preserve his fleet so as to cover the seas and guard the coasts, protect trade to the Indies, and carry out, when the British have left, some of those other projects he proposes to undertake.' <sup>2</sup>

No comment is necessary on this lamentable document.

Of the actual siege of Gibraltar it is not possible to say more here than that the defence put up by Eliott and his men, throughout the later years of the war, against a vast, well-supplied, and well-ordered artillery, is one of the brightest pages in British history.

Whilst on his homeward voyage, Darby learnt that a French squadron under La Motte Picquet was at sea with the object of intercepting a British convoy expected from the West Indies, and he at once detached Rear-Admiral Digby, with nine of the line, to seek him out.

It will be remembered that Rodney found a great wealth of merchandise at St. Eustatius. This he loaded in thirty-four merchant ships, which he sent home under escort of two ships of the line and three frigates in command of Commodore Hotham. The British Grand Fleet was occupied in relieving Gibraltar when this convoy was due, and the French Ministry were quick to seize the opportunity. Picquet accordingly put to sea with six of the

<sup>1</sup> French National Archives B. 4, 189.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Captain Duro, *Armada Espanola*.



1781  
April 25 line on the 25th of April, and fell in with his quarry a week later about sixty miles west of the Scillies. Hotham ordered the convoy to disperse, but the enemy outsailed the slow, heavy-laden merchant ships and captured twenty-two, whose cargoes were valued at nearly five million pounds. The remainder succeeded in reaching Berehaven. Picquet returned safely to Brest after this successful operation without being sighted by Digby.

May 22 The Grand Fleet anchored at Spithead on the 22nd of May, and the ships were ordered to refit.

Aug. 1 On the 1st of August Darby was at sea again with twenty-two of the line to meet and escort the large West Indian convoys, but had got no farther than the Lizard, when news was received from a Portuguese brig that she had recently sighted a combined Franco-Spanish fleet of about fifty sail of the line in Lat.  $47^{\circ} 21'$ , Long.  $10^{\circ} 21' W.$ , standing to the north-east. The news was startling. The appearance of this armada was quite unexpected, and Darby, after consulting his Rear-Admirals, shaped course for Torbay, where he anchored on the 25th.

After the relief of Gibraltar, the Allies had bestirred themselves and intelligence of their movements had not reached England. The Spanish Ministers, thoroughly disappointed with the efforts of their forces to capture Gibraltar, had turned their attentions to Minorca. Though there was no British fleet in the Mediterranean, they were unwilling to venture on the conquest of the island with their own resources, and eventually persuaded the French Ministry to assist.

June In June de Guichen was sent south with twenty-four of the line to join Cordova at Cadiz and, in July, the combined fleet of forty-nine of the line conveyed the troop transports to Minorca. Troops to the number of 15,000 under command of the Duc de

Aug. 18 Crillon were landed on the 18th of August, whilst a small fleet under Don Bonaventura Moreno established a blockade. The British garrison under General James Murray, one of Wolfe's brigadiers, numbered about 2,700.

On the 11th of November the enemy opened their batteries and the siege began. The final stages were not reached till the next year and will be examined in a subsequent chapter.

After seeing this expedition safely on its way, Cordova and de Guichen decided to make for the western approaches of the Channel in order to intercept convoys from and to the Indies, and also to prevent further relief being sent to Gibraltar and Minorca. It was a sound move and their sudden appearance came as a complete surprise. A great outward-bound fleet of victuallers for America was assembled in Cork, a weakly defended harbour; rich homeward-bound convoys were expected daily; and the only force available to protect them was less than half the strength of the combined fleet. 1781

Great exertions were made to increase the forces, and Darby was eventually strengthened by the addition of three of the line. Troops were moved to the south coast, and offers from volunteer corps were accepted. But for the second time England was to profit by the inability of the enemy sea commanders in Home Waters.

Of the French leaders, de Guichen and La Motte-Picquet had proved themselves men of ability, but the Spanish leader, Cordova, had up till now proved the reverse, and he was the senior.

As soon as news was received that Darby was lying in Torbay, a Council of War was held. De Guichen urged an immediate attack upon the British fleet, as he saw clearly that such an attack might end the war with one blow. He was supported by Don Vincent Dos, third in command of the Spanish fleet, but Chef d'Escadre de Bausset disagreed on technical grounds, and emphasised the difficulties of manœuvring ships to attack a fleet at anchor. Cordova, of course, agreed with de Bausset, and it was decided by a majority to leave Darby alone and attack trade.

But the cruise did not last long. Owing to sickness and other more questionable reasons the squadrons separated on the 5th of September, and returned to their own ports. Towards the end of the month Don Miguel Gaston sailed from Cadiz with eighteen of the line to bring in a rich Havana fleet of sixty-two vessels. Sept. 5

Darby was at sea again on the 11th of September with twenty-five of the line. Sept. 11

1781 The superiority of the combined fleet was 'so great I am to avoid engagement with them which the copper-bottomed ships and the foulness of the Spanish ships will enable me to do.' But he intended to attack if the enemy 'have weakened themselves by detachments.'<sup>1</sup>

His principal objects were the protection of the Leeward Islands and Jamaica homeward-bound fleets and the protection of the English coast. But he was afraid that the 'force with me is very inadequate to the service intended for the squadron.'<sup>1</sup>

Sept. 13 On the 13th he received intelligence from the Admiralty that 'the station of the combined fleet is to cruise 80-100 leagues West from South part of Ireland and keep in the stream of the English Channel. They are to stay out to the end of September and pay great attention to intercept the English convoys. M. de Grasse is to call off St. Domingo and take all the trade from thence, then to send the ten oldest ships forward with his commerce; fourteen ships are to proceed to North America.'<sup>2</sup>

Sept. 19 On the 19th, when off Cape Clear, Darby heard from passing vessels that the French and Spanish fleets had separated off Brest and that the Spanish fleet had been sighted steering to the southward in Lat. 47° 30'. This news was subsequently confirmed from other sources and he decided to send the 'complaining ships to England'<sup>3</sup> and remain on his station, dividing his fleet into squadrons for the better security of the trade. The convoys having passed safely up Channel, he anchored at Spithead on the

Nov. 6 6th of November.

This was Darby's last cruise. He retained the command whilst the fleet was laid up during the winter months but, before the opening of the next campaigning season, the Admiralty appointed a new Commander-in-Chief. On the 3rd of April he was told by the Admiralty that 'the line of battleships which are now at Spithead in readiness for sea are immediately to proceed under the command of Vice-Admiral Barrington'<sup>4</sup> and asked if it was convenient to him to serve under Barrington. He very naturally

1782  
April 3

<sup>1</sup> Darby's Despatch, 'Torbay, September 9, 1781.'

<sup>2</sup> Darby's Despatch, 'Britannia, Torbay, September 13, 1781.'

<sup>3</sup> Darby's Despatch, 'Britannia off Cape Clear, October 21, 1781.'

<sup>4</sup> Darby's letter to Admiralty, 'London, April 3, 1782.'

replied that, as he had held the chief command for so long, he declined the offer. Barrington, who had on two occasions refused a high command, was brought back as a result of the ministerial crisis. On the 8th Darby was informed that Lord Howe had been appointed Commander-in-Chief and as he wrote back 'declining to serve in a subordinate station in the squadron'<sup>1</sup> he was ordered to strike his flag. Darby had performed valuable service and there was no excuse for this harsh treatment of a man who had held the command of the Grand Fleet with much credit at a very critical time. 1781  
April 8

The remarkable feature of these operations in Home Waters was the freedom with which fleets and convoys moved about without interference. La Motte-Picquet, it is true, did succeed in finding the St. Eustatius convoy but, apart from this, ships of the rival fleets were never in contact. Darby relieved Gibraltar, and, in doing so, sailed past superior fleets lying in harbour. De Guichen joined Cordova at Cadiz. The combined fleet threatened the Channel in great force. But not a shot was fired. Darby with his twenty-two of the line could not have given battle to the Armada that appeared in the western approaches, but he might have prevented De Guichen joining Cordova, or de Grasse sailing west, if the well-tested strategy of blockade had been used. As for the combined fleet, their failure is amazing. They held the whiphand. Before them were all the enemy could muster in the way of ships, and behind that relatively weak force were many valuable convoys lying in undefended harbours. An attack on Darby with such a preponderant force could hardly have failed, and would probably have ended the war. 1781

The Grand Fleet did not actually contain every available unit, because activity in the Dutch naval harbours compelled the British Admiralty to maintain a force on the East Coast, and a force on convoy work in the North Sea. The former was under Captain Keith Stewart, and consisted of one ship of the line and a number of frigates; the latter was under Hyde Parker, lately Rodney's second in command in the West Indies, and consisted of six old ships of the line, ranging from a '44' to an '80.' Most

<sup>1</sup> Darby's letter to Admiralty, 'April 8, 1782.'

1781 of Parker's ships were in an unserviceable condition, but they were the best that could be found for the work.

June 27 On the 27th of June Parker sailed with a great convoy of 570 vessels for the Baltic and, in the beginning of July, the Dutch fleet, under the command of Rear-Admiral Zoutman, sailed for the Baltic from the Texel. The Admiralty received intelligence of this movement, and ordered Keith Stewart to detach his ship of the line to join Parker, and this brought the two fleets to an equality.

Aug. 3 At daybreak on the 3rd of August, when Parker was returning with the trade from the Baltic, he sighted the Dutch fleet with a convoy near the Dogger Bank.<sup>1</sup> He at once ordered his convoy to shape course for England, led his fleet towards the enemy, and sent frigates ahead to obtain accurate information. As soon as he made out the enemy's strength he signalled a general chase, which had the effect of drawing his ships out of regular formation, as they were all of different tonnage and speeds. But, before he reached the enemy line, he collected them together by signal to form line abreast and to close to one cable distance apart.

Meanwhile Zoutman had formed his fleet into a well-ordered line of battle to windward of his convoy, ready for Parker's onslaught. Parker held steadily on, and, though he was running down bows on to the Dutchmen's broadsides, not a shot was fired until the British ships turned together just to windward of the enemy's line. They were soon at it hammer and tongs, except the rear British ship, which had no opponent in the early stages of the action owing to Parker laying his ship alongside the Dutch Admiral's ship. Parker was in the fourth ship from the van and Zoutman in the fifth. Thus, as late as 1781, the old ideas of chivalry on the battlefield were not extinct.

At 8 A.M. Parker made the signal for close action, hauled down the signal for 'the line,' and the battle raged until nearly noon, when Parker made sail and drew his fleet clear of the enemy.

Both squadrons were in a dilapidated condition and lay-to near one another refitting.

Zoutman had ordered his convoy to make for the Texel during

<sup>1</sup> For details see Appendix xxiii.

the engagement, and as soon as he was able he led his fleet in the same direction. Parker wished to follow, but was immobilised by his damage. The losses were: British, 104 killed, 339 wounded; Dutch, 142 killed, 403 wounded. 1781

The tangible result of this action was that the British convoy arrived safely at its east coast ports, whilst the Dutch convoy, which was outward-bound, returned to harbour. It is evident that Parker's blood was up, and it is probable that he was still smarting under Rodney's censure when he was serving in the West Indies fleet, and was determined to show he was a fighting Admiral.

He returned to England furious with the Admiralty for having given him such wretched ships to command. Most of them had been taken from Rotten Row. The King and the Prince of Wales embarked in the royal yacht and went out to meet him at the Nore. No doubt the King meant to give rewards for the action, but the Admiral let it be known that none would be accepted if offered at the hands of the Admiralty. He is reported to have spoken with considerable bluntness to the King on the sad state of the Navy. Soon afterwards he was appointed to the East Indies command, but this gallant old seaman's fighting days were over. The *Cato* in which he took passage for his new station was posted as missing. Her fate, like that of so many ships in the sailing era, remained a mystery. His last despatch was dated 'Rio de Janeiro, 9th December, 1782.'

It is not easy to examine this battle critically. On the one hand Hyde Parker had the windward position and could have attacked with full force on a portion of the enemy's line, as the latter were tied to the convoy. On the other hand he commanded a scratch collection of ships, and was perhaps right in attempting nothing but the time-honoured method of ship to ship, which everyone understood. He certainly proved himself a determined commander with a true offensive spirit.

As always happens in such cases, both sides claimed success and each side exaggerated the strength of the other. Whilst no rewards were given to the British fleet, the States General, ignoring the fact that a very important convoy had returned

1781 home in disorder, showered rewards and promotions on their officers. Zoutman was promoted and presented with a gold sword, and nearly all the junior officers received some mark of appreciation such as permission to wear gold epaulettes on one shoulder. Medals were struck and the men received two months' pay.

Nevertheless the Dutch Admiralty did not send the fleet to sea again during the year, and no naval movement occurred till December, when Rear-Admiral Comte Byland with two of the line arrived home from the Indies. Keith Stewart, who succeeded Hyde Parker, hoped to intercept these ships, but Byland evaded him in thick weather.

Whilst this stir was occurring in the North Sea, the British Government were receiving reports from their intelligencers of great activity in the French ports. As soon as de Guichen's squadron returned to Brest from the parade of the combined fleet at the Channel entrance, shipwrights, artisans and sail-makers in great numbers were put to work to refit the ships and prepare others for sea. The dockyard at Rochefort was also ordered to work at high pressure, and merchant ships were collected to load warlike stores and provisions for the next year's campaign.

The French Ministry, fully aware of the importance of de Grasse's fleet in the West Indies, decided to reinforce that fleet and make certain there should be no lack of stores. They also decided to despatch reinforcements to d'Orves and Suffren in the East Indies. Feeling certain that news of these activities would reach the enemy, arrangements were made to escort these reinforcements by a strong fleet until safe from interference. The escort fleet was then to proceed to Cadiz and join forces with Cordova, to prevent any further relief of Gibraltar and Minorca. The command of the escort fleet was given to de Guichen with La Motte-Picquet and de Bausset as junior flag officers, whilst the West Indies reinforcement was placed under M. de Vaudreuil. All was ready early in December, and the whole fleet of nineteen

Dec. 10 sail of the line cleared from Brest on the 10th of the month.

The British plans for the New Year were very similar. A strong reinforcement under Rodney was prepared for the West Indies, six of the line under Sir Richard Bickerton were ordered

to the East Indies, and Kempenfelt was directed to operate with twelve of the line against the French East and West India homebound convoys. 1781

Kempenfelt's force was the first of these to sail. He left Spithead on the 2nd of December and on the 12th, shortly after daybreak, when 150 miles south by west of Ushant, a look-out frigate reported a fleet to the south-east. He immediately ordered his ships to chase and was soon able to gauge the strength and composition of the strangers. It was de Guichen with his large convoy. As Kempenfelt approached he saw that he 'had a prospect of passing between the enemy's ships of war and a great part of their convoy.'<sup>1</sup> He accordingly formed his ships into line and pressed on under full sail. His experienced seamen's eye did not fail him, and the ships of the convoy were soon hauling down their colours all round him. Dec. 2  
Dec. 12

Next morning the fleets were in sight of one another but Kempenfelt, 'perceiving the force so much superior to my squadron, did not think it advisable to hazard an action'<sup>1</sup> and shaped course for home with his fourteen prizes. He anchored at Spithead on the 20th. Five more prizes, which had cleared from Bordeaux with the intention of joining de Guichen, were brought in shortly afterwards by Captain Caldwell of the *Agamemnon*. The cargoes of these nineteen prizes were extremely valuable and for the most important part naval and military stores. They also carried 1,000 soldiers and over 500 seamen. Dec. 20

The Admiralty was severely criticised when Kempenfelt returned. Whilst everyone realised that the Admiral had done remarkably well with his small force, it was felt that he should have been given a larger force, one capable of giving battle to de Guichen. Indeed, the British strategy was very weak on this occasion. Kempenfelt fully realised this. To Middleton he wrote :— 'It (the order) says, to sail with ships as soon as they are ready or with such part of them as I may think necessary for the service. To be sure, I shall think the whole necessary when they tell me the enemy's escort is eighteen sail of the line, four of which armed enflute. . . . There are but two frigates here of

<sup>1</sup> Kempenfelt's Despatch, 'Victory at sea, December 14, 1781.



1781 those appointed. I needn't notice to you the necessity of a number of such upon the service I am going on.'<sup>1</sup> Upon receipt of this letter, Middleton wrote to Sandwich that no seamen would undertake this service with so inferior a force on their own opinion, but would readily sail if ordered to do so.

It is evident that ships were available to strengthen Kempenfelt's squadron. In a memorandum entitled 'Thoughts on the Campaign of 1782,' Middleton wrote, 'Suffering Admiral Kempenfelt to sail with so small a force, when the ships fitting for the West Indies and others from the Downs might have joined him with advantage to other services, was an error that not only prevented that Admiral from attacking Mr. Guichen to advantage, but lost us the island of St. Christophers. There were many blunders which concurred to this disappointment; and had a man of less activity than Admiral Kempenfelt been appointed to command, the squadron would not have got to sea in time for any service nor have ventured an attack in the face of so superior an enemy.'<sup>2</sup>

In another letter Kempenfelt expresses his opinion of Sandwich. It was the same as that held by the majority of senior Naval Officers. 'Now, as the orders stand, if I proceed to sea without the whole of the ships put under my command and the design proves abortive through want of an adequate force, the blame will be fixed on me.'<sup>3</sup> Thanks to his outstanding ability and the inefficiency of the enemy, he succeeded despite the mistakes made in London. He pointed out in his report that if he had had more frigates he would have taken still more of the transports and, with much truth, remarked that de Guichen was 'within an ace of suffering a most ridiculous disgrace—that of having all his convoy taken from him.'<sup>4</sup>

De Guichen had ordered things badly to be caught with his main fleet to leeward of his transports. If he had had frigates flung out towards his enemy's line of approach from Channel

<sup>1</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, 'November 24, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxviii.).

<sup>3</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, 'November 25, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>4</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, 'Victory at sea. Ushant, N. 59 E. 62 leagues, December 14, 1781' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

ports there might have been more excuse, but to be in such a weak tactical formation comparatively close to an enemy's coast-line without any precautions was inexcusable. 1781

He was not even destined to get clear with what remained, for a heavy gale dispersed and damaged his ships shortly after Kempenfelt's blow and, of all the armada, only two battleships and five transports crossed the Atlantic. Providence thus effected what the British Admiralty could have done, but failed to do.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE FIGHT FOR THE WEST INDIAN ISLANDS— FINAL PHASE—1782

**1781**  
**Nov. 27** PARLIAMENT met on the 27th of November, two days after the news of the disaster at Yorktown reached London. The King's speech gave no indication of yielding to the Colonists and the Government policy once more underwent severe criticism. The leaders of the opposition inveighed against the further prosecution of the war in America, attacked the Secretary for American affairs, laying to his charge Cornwallis's disaster, and criticised the First Lord of the Admiralty for the inferiority of the Navy in all quarters of the globe.

**Dec. 12** The motion for the address was, however, carried in the Commons by 218 votes to 129. On the 12th of December, when the vote for the army supplies was being taken, it transpired that the Cabinet had decided on a change of policy. Sir James Lowther tabled a motion 'That it is the opinion of the House that all further attempts to reduce the Americans to obedience by force would be ineffectual and injurious to the true interests of this country by weakening her powers to resist her ancient and confederated enemies.'

Lord North, speaking for the Government, admitted that 'It was beyond dispute that our endeavours to protect our friends in America had proved ineffectual' . . . and agreed to the purport of the motion. 'If gentlemen thought it would be improper to continue an inland continental war in America by marching armies through the colonies as in the last unfortunate campaign, he was ready to say that he did not think such a war ought to be carried on in the present circumstances of our affairs.' He then

pointed out that this public expression of opinion told the enemy 1781  
nothing as the estimates showed no increase on those of the  
previous year, and, as an army had since been lost, it must be  
evident to the world that a change of plan had been decided on.

The debate was carried on with great keenness. Some members  
objected to the granting of supplies unless the American war was  
stopped altogether, whilst others argued for a continuation of war  
in that theatre. Germain described the project of withdrawal  
as weak, impracticable and dangerous. He argued against  
relinquishing the posts already held, but agreed that the campaign  
would have to be conducted on new lines.

When the vote was taken the Government still had a majority  
of forty-one.

On the 14th the Army Estimates came up for discussion and Dec. 14  
the Secretary for War had a sad story to tell of reduced battalions,  
mortality in the West Indies, non-effectives to the number  
of 25,000 and poor recruiting. But the estimates were passed  
for 191,000 men for the coming year. The Naval Estimates  
also were passed, though not without heavy criticism. Parliament  
then adjourned till the 20th of January, and during the recess  
Germain resigned and was created Viscount Sackville. Mr.  
Welbore Ellis succeeded him as Secretary of State for the American  
Department and Sir Guy Carleton was appointed successor to  
Clinton.

But though the supplies had been voted the Government was 1782  
losing ground fast and, when Parliament reassembled in January, Jan.  
Fox launched an attack on Sandwich, which took the form of a  
motion to appoint a Committee to inquire into the want of success  
of the Navy.

The debate was adjourned till the 7th of February, when Fox Feb. 7  
moved a resolution, 'That it appears to this Committee that there  
was gross mismanagement in the administration of naval affairs  
in the year 1781.' The Government could only claim a majority  
of twenty-two when the vote was taken, and in a further debate  
on the extraordinary estimate this dwindled to nineteen. General  
Conway then gave notice that he intended to move a question  
on the American War. On the 22nd of February he brought Feb. 22

1782 forward a motion that a humble address should be presented to the King imploring him to put an end to the War in America. The motion was lost by one vote.

Feb. 27 On the 27th a petition to the same effect from the Lord Mayor and Common Council of London was presented to Parliament, and Conway, after moving that this petition be read, made a strong speech in favour of ending hostilities in America. He then moved 'That it is the opinion of this House that the further prosecution of offensive war on the continent of North America for the purpose of reducing the revolted colonies to obedience by force will be the means of weakening the efforts of this country against her European enemies, and tends, under the present circumstances, dangerously to increase the mutual enmity so fatal to the interests of both Great Britain and America, and, by preventing an happy reconciliation with that country, to frustrate the earnest desire graciously expressed by His Majesty to restore the blessings of public tranquillity.'

This time the Government were defeated, the motion being carried by a majority of nineteen votes.

Mar. 20 The opposition continued their attacks and on the 20th of March Lord North announced that the Ministry was at an end. The Marquis of Rockingham then formed a Ministry with the Earl of Shelburne and Fox as Secretaries of State. Keppel returned to the Admiralty as First Lord and Conway was appointed Commander-in-Chief. The selection of a sailor for the office of First Lord must have gladdened the heart of Middleton who wrote in December of the previous year. 'The fleet of England consists of upwards of 400 sail of pennants. It contains near 10,000 men. The management of such a force requires unremitted application, continued watching, great judgement. If these are wanting, no success can possibly be expected. They have been wanting in almost every particular and His Majesty in consequence of it has lost a great part of his dominions. Two campaigns more will ruin us in the West and the East will follow. The writer does not yet despair, because the fleet is entire; but unless the Cabinet will speedily propose to His Majesty to add a seaman to their assistance—unless the fleet is managed otherways than

it has been and the Admiralty office restored to its original institution and maintains a proper authority over its officers, no human means can save this country. The game is almost over and we have not a moment to lose.’<sup>1</sup> Keppel selected his old second in command, Harland, and Vice-Admiral Pigot as the other members of the Board, and one of the first actions of the new First Lord was to appoint Howe to the command of the Grand Fleet. 1782

The new ministry at once began to explore means of bringing an end to the war in America, and the negotiations are described in a later chapter.

In the meantime Rodney had sailed for the final phase of the battle for the Islands, having cleared from Spithead with twelve of the line on the 14th of January. It can be seen from Middleton’s letters that it was not generally expected that Rodney would return to the West Indies, but, when the appointment was finally settled, there was regrettable delay in getting him to sea. Jan. 14

He arrived at Portsmouth early in December, but only found four ships ready, and after clearing from Portsmouth he was wind-bound for three weeks in Torbay. There was great difficulty in filling up the complements of the ships and one of Rodney’s letters to his wife gives a sad account of the state of the dockyards. ‘It is impossible for you to conceive my chagrin at being detained in this horrid port, where I have experienced nothing but storms of wind, neglect, unwillingness, and disobedience to orders that they receive from the Admiralty. Faction and party have descended so low as to enter the minds of even dockyard officers, and induce them to do their duty negligently, for which they deserve to be turned out.’<sup>2</sup>

To a man of Rodney’s temperament the delay must have been exasperating. He was straining to get to grips once more with his old enemy. ‘I have not a doubt,’ he wrote, ‘that the force of His Majesty’s fleet in the West Indies will on my arrival there be such as to enable me to defeat the designs of His Majesty’s enemies

<sup>1</sup> Middleton’s ‘*Project for the Naval Campaign, 1782, December 25, 1781*’ (N.R.S., vol. xxxviii.).

<sup>2</sup> Mundy’s *Life of Lord Rodney*.

1782 and I hope answer our most sanguine expectations, my utmost abilities shall be exerted towards obtaining so glorious a purpose.'<sup>1</sup> When urged by the Admiralty to hasten his sailing he replied, 'I beg you will assure Their Lordships that I shall be miserable till we get sight of the enemy's fleet. The force I am now honoured with is such when joyned that I flatter myself it will restore the Empire of the Ocean to Great Britain.'<sup>2</sup>

Rodney did not arrive in the West Indies until the third week in February, two months after active operations had commenced in the area of his command.

Hood, who was in temporary command, had been kept extremely busy ever since he returned to Barbados from the abortive campaign in North American waters. On the 13th of December he received letters from home informing him of ships and troops preparing at Brest, which were believed to be for an attack on Jamaica. He was also told that a reinforcement of eight of the line under Rodney was being fitted out, and that the safety of Jamaica in addition to the other British islands was his special duty. He was ordered to send immediate notice to the Admiral on the Jamaica station if he believed an attack there was to be expected, and to consult with the general as to the best means of relieving the island if attacked. Hood's reply shows the difficulties he had to contend with to maintain the squadron in fighting condition. He said that the orders would receive his utmost attention, and added:—'If I can only get a month's bread I will certainly sail and use my best endeavours to intercept the armament from Brest before it reached Martinique . . . but if no bread can be got at Antigua or St. Kitts I shall from necessity be compelled to remain in this bay or go no further than St. Lucia till a convoy arrives from England.'<sup>3</sup> Nor was the state of the ships satisfactory. 'We have several vessels here that are not of much use; for if their bottoms are not kept clean they will be liable to be taken and whenever they go to Antigua

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's letter to Admiralty, '*Arrogant*, Cawsand Bay, December 18, at noon, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's letter to Admiralty, '*Arrogant*, Cawsand Bay, December 21, 1782.'

<sup>3</sup> Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur*, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, December 13, 1781.'

their crews desert and before they can be remanned become foul again.' <sup>1</sup> 1782

Meanwhile, de Grasse and de Bouillé had determined on operations for the reduction of all the British islands and were expecting a strong reinforcement of troops and ships, which, as we have seen, never left Europe, thanks to Kempfenfelt and a providential storm.

But their force was superior without this reinforcement, and they sailed in December for their first objective, Barbados.

Soon after his arrival at Barbados, Hood received intelligence that the French fleet had cleared from Martinique and were standing to the northward. He accordingly sailed on the 14th, but the fleets did not meet, as strong winds prevented de Grasse beating to windward. 1781  
Dec. 14

'The whole of the French fleet,' wrote Hood, 'appeared off St. Lucia on the 17th of last month endeavouring to get to windward and having carried away many topmasts and yards in struggling against very squally weather, returned to Fort Royal Bay on the 23rd in the evening and, on the 28th, came out again with upward of forty transports, manœuvring as before, but without making any attempt to land.' <sup>2</sup>

On the 2nd of January de Grasse again sailed and shaped course to the northward. Hood at once despatched frigates to watch and report, and also sent messages to St. Kitts and Antigua, to assure the civil and military officers that he would come to their relief as soon as he heard they were attacked. He himself returned to Barbados, as he was convinced the island was de Grasse's objective. 1782  
Jan. 2

On the 14th of January he received a letter from Governor Shirley of St. Kitts, informing him that a large fleet of transports had been sighted from the hills of Nevis on the 10th. He at once put to sea with twenty-two of the line with the intention of relieving St. Kitts, and made St. John's Road, Antigua, his rendezvous. He was still anxious about his bread supply and 'anchored in St. John's road to gett what flower I could as a Jan. 14

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur at sea*, January 20, 1782.'



1782  
Jan. 16 succedaneum for bread.'<sup>1</sup> On the 16th a frigate joined with news that St. Kitts was invested.

His letter to Middleton during passage shows clearly the straits he was in owing to want of stores and repairing staff. 'Never was such weather remembered in this country as we have had for several weeks past ; every frigate I have sent to sea has returned a mere wreck. Pray send out copper for all the small craft here. . . . When the French fleet was at sea I had not a single frigate ; all were shifting their masts and rigging. The *Invincible* is in a miserable state and must be sent home soon or she will be a coffin for all that are in her . . . all our ships go to ruin for want of caulking, and some method should be hit upon to furnish a hundred caulkers for the use of the fleet.'<sup>2</sup> Despite these difficulties he determined on fighting de Grasse as soon as he was ready for sea. 'When the *President* joins I shall be twenty-two strong with which I beg you will assure their Lordships I will seek and give battle to the Count de Grasse be his numbers as they may.'<sup>3</sup> The fleet anchored in St. John's

Jan. 21 Road on the 21st of January and embarked about 1,000 troops under General Prescott.

Jan. 9 De Grasse arrived off Basseterre Road, St. Kitts, on the 9th of January. About 8,000 troops were at once landed and, as an instance of the complete absence of loyalty at that time, the principal islanders approached the enemy and promised not to take up arms or commit any act of hostility. Shirley and General Fraser, being unable to resist the landing, retired to the fort on Brimstone Hill.

Jan. 12 By the 12th de Bouillé had practically invested the fort and this was the news that Shirley managed to get conveyed to Hood. Hood was able to obtain accurate information of the enemy's dispositions and prepared his plan of action which he imparted to his officers. The frequent references in the logs to signals ordering Captains, Lieutenants and even Midshipmen on board either the senior flagship or one of the junior flagships show clearly

<sup>1</sup> Hood's Despatch, February 7, '*Barfleur*, Basseterre Road, St. Christophers, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Middleton, January 20, 1782, *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>3</sup> Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur* at sea, January 20, 1782.'

that Hood was a very different stamp of man from his contemporaries. He took his juniors into his confidence and explained and discussed his plans with them. 1782

On the 23rd of January Hood proceeded to sea with the intention of surprising the French fleet at daybreak. He knew that their ships were not anchored in good order in the harbour, and, as they were in an east and west line, the prevailing wind would favour an attack on the easternmost ships, whilst those to the westward would have to beat up against the wind to assist their consorts. It was a well-thought-out plan, but it was unfortunately ruined by a collision during the night between the leading ship and a frigate. This caused a delay for repairs, and the fleet was unable to deliver its blow at daylight. Instead it was sighted by the French look-outs and de Grasse at once put to sea. Jan. 23

During the 24th the fleets were within sight of one another, Hood keeping the windward position. Next day he made a bold decision. Realising the defensive power of a fleet anchored properly in a roadstead, he determined to seize the Basseterre position. 'As I thought I had a fair prospect of gaining the anchorage he left, and well knowing it was the only chance I had of saving the island if it was to be saved, I pushed for it.'<sup>1</sup> At 5.30 A.M. he formed his line-of-battle ships at one cable distance, and by noon the fleet was sailing close under the high land of Nevis. De Grasse endeavoured to force action, but he was dropping astern slightly all the time as his ships were to leeward and disposed in quarter line. Jan. 24

At 2 P.M. the *Ville de Paris*, de Grasse's flagship, opened fire and the French attack developed on the British rear. Hood, fully trusting his Captains to ward off the attack, ordered his van to crowd sail and take up their berths in the anchorage as arranged. At 3.30 the van ships began to drop anchor. For a moment the British rear was in a precarious position when the *Ville de Paris* attempted to lead through an unduly large gap between two of the rear ships. If she had succeeded, the three rear British ships would

<sup>1</sup> Hood's Despatch, 'Barfleur, Basseterre Road, St. Christophers, February 7, 1782.'



DIAGRAM 18.—BATTLE OF ST. KITTs, JANUARY 25TH, 1782.

have been overwhelmed, but Captain Cornwallis, Lord Robert Manners and Commodore Affleck, of the three ships ahead of the gap, saved the situation in a masterly manner by backing their sails and dropping down to the assistance of their consorts. Having just managed to baulk de Grasse, the rear followed after the van. 1782

Hood described this spirited action as follows : ' The enemy gave a preference to Commodore Affleck but he kept up so noble a fire and was so supported by his seconds, Captain Cornwallis and Lord Robert Manners, that the loss and damage in those ships was very trifling and they very much preserved the ships in the rear.'<sup>1</sup> It must have been an inspiring sight as the ships, one by one, came to anchor midst the roar of the broadsides, for, as the rear moved forward into position, the van ships at anchor were able to bring their guns to bear. The French fleet sailed past delivering a heavy fire, and then wore round in succession and left the field of battle. (Diagram No. 18.) As Lord Robert Manners wrote, ' The taking of this road was well judged, well conducted, and well executed though indeed the French had an opportunity, which they missed, of bringing our rear to a very severe account. The van and centre divisions brought to an anchor under the fire of the rear, which was engaged with the enemy's centre, and then, the centre being at anchor and properly placed, covered us while we anchored, making, I think, the most masterly manœuvre I ever saw.'<sup>2</sup> It was magnificent, and, though the manœuvre exposed the rear to a severe attack, Hood's trust in his band of brothers was not misplaced.

He would not have hesitated to attack the French fleet, if he could have achieved his object by doing so. ' Would the event of a battle have determined the fate of the island,' he wrote, ' I would, without hesitation, have attacked the enemy from my knowledge how much was to be expected from an English squadron commanded by men amongst whom is no other contention than

<sup>1</sup> Hood's Despatch, ' *Barfleur*, Basseterre Road, St. Christophers, February 7, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Lord Robert Manners to Duke of Rutland, February 8th, 1782 (N.R.S., vol. iii.)

1782 who should be most forward in rendering services to his King and country.' <sup>1</sup>

As soon as de Grasse had sailed away, Hood, issued the necessary orders for the ships to take up the defensive line he had decided on. The easternmost ship was anchored as close as possible to the land, the line then ran in a westerly direction with the westernmost six ships on a north and south line, so that, from whichever direction de Grasse attacked, full broadside fire could be brought to bear by at least six ships.

Jan. 26 At 7 A.M. on the 26th, de Grasse appeared off the anchorage and led his fleet straight towards the British line. He fetched the third ship from the eastern end, and by 9 A.M. the guns of the two fleets were thundering at one another as the French fleet filed past. De Grasse led most gallantly and, by the nature of the manœuvre, his ship received the first broadsides of each British ship in succession, but nothing could shake Hood's men and he had to retire without accomplishing his object.' According to Hood's report, the French flagship was on the heel all next day covering up shot holes. The same afternoon the attack was renewed, this time on the western end of the line, but without success.

No more attacks were made, but the French fleet remained in sight of the island, cruising to leeward, and waiting for de Bouillé to capture the British position on Brimstone Hill.

Hood now turned his attention to the beleaguered garrison. An officer, who had succeeded in passing the enemy's lines, brought back a spirited message from Fraser to the effect, 'That as he (*Hood*) had taken the trouble to come with troops to his assistance he should doubtless be glad of the honour of seeing him but that he was in no want of him or his troops.'

Jan. 27 On the 27th Hood wrote to Prescott proposing to land 2,400 men as a diversion in favour of the Brimstone Hill garrison. He suggested a landing place and pointed out that retreat could be secured. Prescott replied that, though he did not think he could hold a position for long, he wished to be landed. The landing

<sup>1</sup> Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur*, Basseterre Road, St. Christophers, February 7, 1782.'

was effected on the 28th, and the troops were immediately in action and drove off a portion of the enemy's forces with considerable loss. Next morning de Bouillé himself appeared with 4,000 men, but did not venture to attack as Prescott had taken up a strong position. But the British troops were far outnumbered, and on the 30th Prescott wrote that, as no reinforcement could be thrown into Brimstone Hill, he considered the troops should return to their proper duty of garrisoning Antigua. Hood concurred and the transports sailed on the 1st of February.

1782  
Jan. 28

Jan. 30

Feb. 1

But he decided to keep the fleet in its defensive line so long as de Grasse's fleet was in sight, as moving to windward would leave Antigua an easy prey for the French forces. He was very anxious to hear of Rodney's arrival as he expected de Grasse would be shortly reinforced. 'I am in no fear of the enemy's present force,' he wrote, 'though it consists of thirty of the line, two fifty's and seven frigates; but what will become of me if it is reinforced before Sir George Rodney appears, God knows!' <sup>1</sup> 'Surely Sir George Rodney will soon be here. I have impatiently and daily expected him since the middle of the month.' <sup>2</sup>

He was extremely anxious that the garrison should hold out, and on the 12th of February he sent an officer through the enemy's lines to inform the general that he was confident de Grasse would soon tire and hoped the defenders would hold out for ten days more; but that evening an officer arrived on board with a letter from Shirley and Fraser to say that they had surrendered.

Feb. 12

The garrison had been unable to mount sufficient guns at Brimstone Hill as the inhabitants refused assistance, and eight 24-pdrs., two 13-inch mortars, 1,500 shells and 6,000 cannon balls fell into the hands of de Bouillé, who was doubly grateful for the haul as his ammunition ship had been sunk on passage from Martinique.

Hood, seeing the enemy preparing to move mortars into position to attack his ships, and his presence being no longer necessary in the Roads, decided to sail and effect junction with

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, *Barham Papers*, February 7, 1782 (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>2</sup> Hood's Despatch, 'Barfleur, Basseterre Road, St. Christophers, February 7, 1782.'

1782 Feb. 13 Rodney as soon as possible. On the evening of the 13th, 'as it was of very great importance that he should carry the squadron to Sir George Rodney in as perfect a state as possible,'<sup>1</sup> he called his Captains on board and explained his intentions. Each ship was to cut its cable at 11 P.M. without signal, leave a light on the buoy, and when clear of the anchorage shape course for Antigua. Thanks to the efficiency of the personnel the manœuvre was perfectly executed, and next morning de Grasse was gazing with amazement at an empty anchorage.

'Nothing could have been more fortunately executed, as not one accident happened from it,' wrote Lord Robert Manners. 'Taking the whole in one light, though not successful in the point we aimed at, nevertheless it was well conducted, and has given the enemy a pretty severe check, and if you give him half the credit the enemy does, Sir Samuel Hood will stand very high in the public estimation. Their sea officers say it was a bold and well-conducted attempt. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

According to the same writer, de Bouillé and de Grasse were at variance during the final stage of the operations and de Grasse stated, shortly before the capitulation, that he was only prepared to maintain his position for a week longer whatever happened. If this was true, Hood's entreaties to the garrison to hold out were fully justified.

As soon as the British fleet had disappeared de Grasse repaired to Nevis to take in stores.

Feb. 19 Hood arrived at St. John's, Antigua, late on the 19th to take in provisions and sailed on the 22nd to join Rodney at Barbados.

Feb. 19 The latter arrived at this island on the 19th of February. There he heard that de Grasse and de Bouillé had invested St. Kitts, and that Hood was to windward of Basseterre. He ordered his ships to water with all despatch and, when ready, sailed for

Feb. 23 Antigua. On arrival there on the 23rd he heard of the capitulation of Brimstone Hill and that Hood had sailed forty-eight hours earlier. He at once ordered his ships to 'take in every store

<sup>1</sup> Hood's Despatch, '*Barfleur* at sea, February 22, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Lord Robert Manners to the Duke of Rutland, February 22, 1782 (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

they could possibly stow,'<sup>1</sup> and sailed as soon as possible to effect junction with Hood. The two Admirals joined forces to windward of Antigua on the 25th of February, and the British fleet was once more in sufficient strength to seek out the enemy. 1782 Feb. 25

Rodney at once shaped course for Martinique in the hopes of cutting off de Grasse from his main base and had high hopes of calms delaying the French fleet, but he was to be disappointed as his quarry was safely at anchor in Fort Royal Bay by the time he arrived there. He then sailed down to St. Lucia to refit and provision Hood's ships, and left frigates to watch the enemy.

He had no doubt about the enemy's intentions. He wrote to Sir Peter Parker and to Governor Dalling to tell them that he was fully convinced that de Grasse intended to effect a junction with the Spanish fleet and attack Jamaica. He told Parker to keep his squadron of four ships of the line and two '44's' ready to join him off St. Domingo and to keep up 'constant intelligence by swift sailing frigates.' He assured him that the moment he knew that de Grasse had sailed to the west he would hasten to the assistance of the island.<sup>2</sup> He fully realised the heavy responsibility that rested on his shoulders at this critical time. 'I am of opinion,' he wrote to his wife, 'that the great events which must decide the Empire of the ocean will be either off Jamaica or St. Domingo.'<sup>3</sup>

The French islands were at this time in a deplorable state owing to lack of stores. St. Eustatius was no longer a great storehouse. The Danish islands were unable to produce sufficient for their own wants and the results of Kempenfelt's action and the subsequent storm were apparent. Rodney knew that an attempt would be made to revictual the islands, but waited for definite intelligence before taking action.

He ordered three frigates to cruise to windward of Barbados, as far north as the latitude of Dominica, and others to act as a connecting link with the fleet. The inaction irritated him and he longed to strike at the enemy somewhere. 'Would to God,'

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Formidable, Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia, March 15, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Formidable, Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia, March 5, 1782.'

<sup>3</sup> Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*.



1782 he wrote, 'that General Mathew had but a sufficient number of troops to spare for the defence of St. Lucia (which island is of more consequence than all the British Caribbee islands) I would answer for it that St. Christophers and Nevis would not be long under the Dominion of France.'<sup>1</sup>

In March news was received that a convoy was expected shortly from France and that six Spanish ships carrying 4,000 troops 'sailed from Cadiz to meet at the rendezvous of the combined force of France and Spain (which would be at Guarico or Cumberland harbour) opposite Jamaica.'<sup>2</sup> Rodney at once took steps to intercept these squadrons, but only considered the southern approaches from the east. Hood implored Rodney to station half the available force off Désirade and half off Point Salines so that the northern as well as the southern approaches to Martinique would be covered, but Rodney was firmly of opinion that the convoy would not come by the northern passage.

Mar. 16 The fleet sailed on the 16th of March for its station and on  
Mar. 20 the 20th Hood received fresh orders which extended the line to the north, though still not far enough in his opinion. By these orders the fleet was disposed on a long line to windward of the islands; Hood's division between forty-five and sixty miles to windward of the north-east of Martinique, stretching as far north as Dominica; Rodney's division between forty-five and sixty miles to windward of Martinique, stretching as far north as the latitude of the north end; and Drake's division between forty-five and sixty miles to windward of Point Salines, stretching as far north as the latitude of the 'body' of Martinique. At the same time five frigates and some armed vessels were detached to watch Fort Royal, and the remainder of the frigates stationed 150 miles to windward of the islands to give early news of the enemy's approach.

Mar. 23 Hood, in acknowledging the receipt of these orders, wrote that he 'rejoiced exceedingly' at the new plan. On the 23rd he received a further letter from Rodney in which the Commander-in-Chief stated that he would 'by no means think of keeping the

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Formidable, Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia, March 15, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Formidable, Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia, March 7, 1782.'

fleet so much to the northward ' and that he was ' determined to keep the fleet directly to windward of Martinique and have only cruisers to the Northwards ' as he could not by any means be induced to think ' the enemy will make any of the Northern Islands. ' <sup>1</sup> 1782

It is evident that Hood had stretched further to the north than the orders warranted. He was all along convinced the convoy was coming in by the northern passage. He was right. On the 28th a despatch vessel, which had been on watch off Martinique, brought the unwelcome news that the French convoy had anchored in Fort Royal Bay on the 20th. Only two ships of the line had accompanied the convoy, but these raised de Grasse's fleet to thirty-five of the line as against Rodney's thirty-six and the much-needed stores and provisions had got through safely. As Hood had ' feared, foretold, and troubled to prevent ' <sup>2</sup> the French fleet had made Désirade, and then run down between Dominica and Martinique. Mar. 28

It is not always easy to judge these matters. Rodney was convinced that the French would carry out their usual practice and come in by the south, that it was bad strategy to stretch the fleet too far as they could not quickly concentrate, and that a fleet cruising to windward was in the best position to protect Barbados, St. Lucia, and the trade. He described his disposition as one ' thought by every officer of the fleet to be such as to render it impossible for any convoy bound to the French islands to escape. ' <sup>3</sup>

Hood was convinced that the French would come in by the north, that the stretching out of the line was not weak strategy as the squadrons could always concentrate in plenty of time if de Grasse was reported to be moving, and that to keep the whole force to guard one approach, when half were amply sufficient, was inexcusable. He was very upset at the failure. ' I have really fretted myself ill ; for nothing short of a miracle can now retrieve the nation's affairs in these seas. ' <sup>3</sup>

In discussing the issue between these two famous admirals, it must be remembered that they had no accurate intelligence

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Hood, ' *Formidable at sea*, March 22, 1782 ' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Jackson, ' *Barfleur*, Gros Islet Bay, March 31, 1782, ' *Barham Papers* (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>3</sup> Rodney's Despatch, ' *Formidable at sea*, April 14, 1782. '

1782 of the strength of the escort. If a strong squadron got through safely, de Grasse would be much superior and in a position to carry out his designs of capturing the British islands with every hope of success. In the circumstances, Hood's contention that the fleet should be divided into two squadrons of eighteen ships each, disposed so as to make certain of intercepting the reinforcement whichever way it came, appears sound. It was certainly very fortunate for Rodney that only two ships of the line accompanied the convoy and, taking everything into consideration, the disposition of the fleet was not the best under the circumstances.

After the convoy had passed, there was nothing to keep Rodney to windward of the islands and he decided to concentrate all his force at St. Lucia, and watch de Grasse's fleet by a chain of frigates. On the other hand, Hood thought it unnecessary to retain every available ship at St. Lucia. He wished to send a regiment and storeship at once to Jamaica under escort of five or six of the line, and appear with the remainder off Fort Royal and offer battle to de Grasse or block him in. He realised the slight inferiority in numbers but would 'be happy to meet the noble Count with a line of battle of thirty-three.'<sup>1</sup>

The two admirals had a long conference on the strategy to be employed, during which Rodney expressed agreement with Hood's views. But he did not act on them and kept his whole force concentrated. He was undoubtedly right.

April 5 Late on the 5th of April a ship arrived at St. Lucia with some deserters, who stated that de Grasse had embarked 9,000 troops in transports, and intended to sail on the 8th to join the Spanish fleet for an attack on Jamaica. This news proved true.

On the morning of the 8th the fateful signal that 'the enemy were coming out and standing to the north-west'<sup>2</sup> was passed through the chain of frigates to Rodney. The British fleet at once weighed, and by noon all the ships were clear of the harbour and standing after the enemy under a press of canvas.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, '*Barfleur*, Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia, April 3, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. xxxii.).

<sup>2</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Formidable* at sea, April 14, 1782.'

<sup>3</sup> For details see Appendix xxiv.

The joint expedition against Jamaica was part of the war plan agreed on by the French and Spanish ministers. It presented many difficulties to the naval commander responsible for carrying it out, as, in addition to the supply vessels for the expedition, he had also to convoy the trade for France. Furthermore, de Grasse knew that a slightly superior British fleet was lying at St. Lucia and realised what a dead-weight the convoy of 150 vessels would be when, as was certain, the British fleet appeared in pursuit. There was also little chance of obtaining a good start as the British frigates were always off the harbour entrance. 1782

As his principal object was to effect concentration with the Spanish fleet without being brought to action, whilst at the same time safeguarding the convoy, he decided to sail close to the islands on his passage west so that the convoy could take refuge in case of attack. But the slow speed of his unwieldy armada soon ruined his plans. By 2.30 P.M. on the 8th the leading British frigate had obtained touch, and by 6 o'clock the main bodies were in sight of one another from the masthead. April 8

By daylight next morning the distance between the fleets had considerably decreased, and the whole French fleet could be seen by the British van ships bearing N.N.E. to E., distant four to twelve miles. De Grasse had sailed close to Dominica during the night and had experienced calms under the lee of the island, but by 6 o'clock about fifteen sail of the line had worked clear of the northern point and, feeling the trade wind, had become separated from the remainder. The British fleet had a similar experience, and Hood's van division of eight ships drew away from the centre at about 7 o'clock. April 9

As the two fleets closed, it became more and more apparent to de Grasse that he could never achieve his object if he remained with his convoy, and he decided on a new plan. He ordered the convoy to make for shelter under the guns of Guadeloupe and the fleet to work to windward. His intention was to draw Rodney away, and then, trusting to better sailing qualities, throw off the pursuit, rejoin the convoy, and run down west to the rendezvous.

But Hood's small squadron, out of supporting distance from

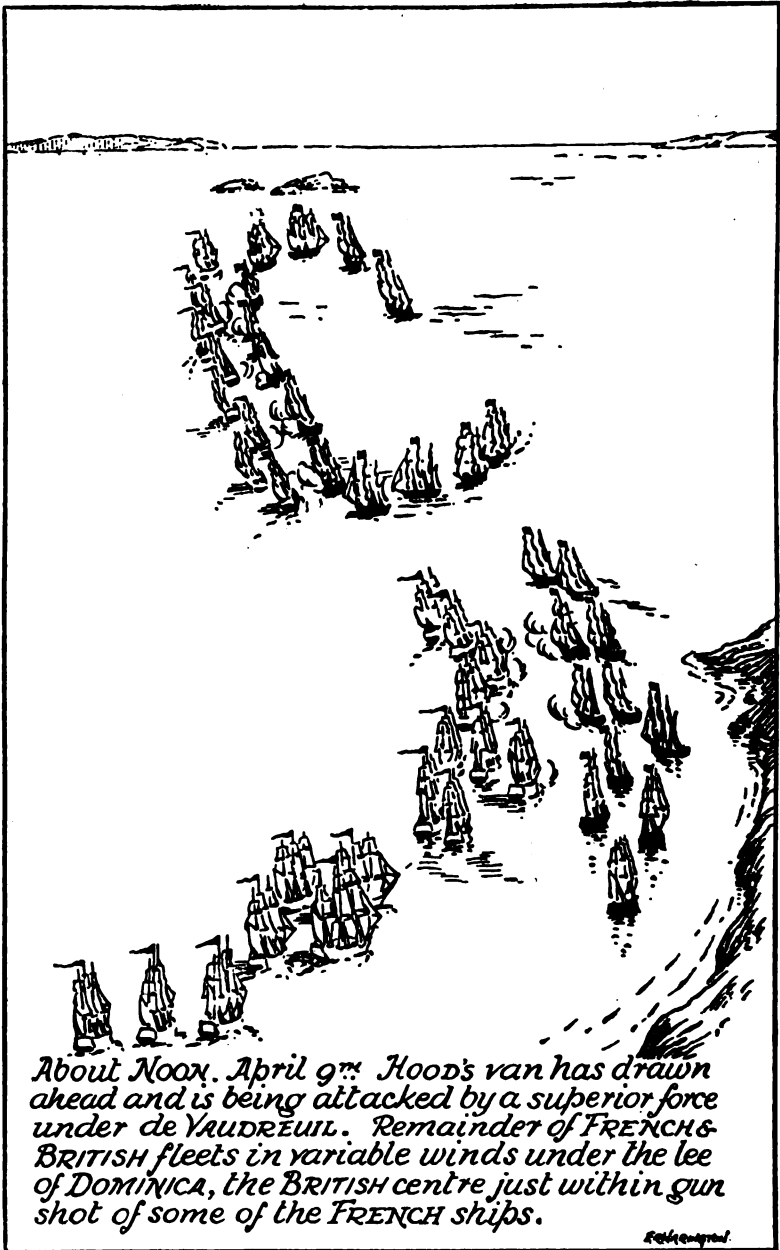


DIAGRAM 19.—BATTLE OF THE SAINTS, APRIL 9TH, 1782, 10 A.M.

the remainder, proved too great a temptation, and the Battle of the Saints began with a fight between the two van squadrons, whilst the centre and rear divisions were becalmed behind the island. 1782

It was a great opportunity for de Grasse. He was able to bring a much superior force to bear on Hood's squadron, and, if the attack resulted in the destruction or even the disablement of some of Hood's ships, he would be free to carry out his plan. He failed, however, to take full advantage of the position and only detached de Vaudreuil's squadron of fifteen ships to attack, when as Hood wrote 'he might have cut us up by pouring a succession of fresh ships upon us as long as he pleased.'<sup>1</sup>

De Vaudreuil ran down, turned to the north when he struck Hood's division, and sailed along the British line exchanging broadsides. (Diagram No. 19.) Firing took place at long range, the French opening at 9.48, and the British at 10.6, and it is interesting to note that the action was controlled to a great extent by Rodney, who made the signal to open fire and also various other signals before, during, and after the engagement. Hood, not wishing to draw too far away from the main body, backed his topsails to take way off the ships.

Finding his opponent practically stationary, de Vaudreuil ordered his ships to tack in succession when his leading ship was clear. He then led round and for the second time sailed past the British line, but still at long range. It was fear of the British carronades that kept him off. 'Si nous nous fussions mis à portée de leurs carronades,' he wrote, 'nous aurions été promptement dégrées et nous aurions été battus.' In the meantime the British centre and rear had felt a light breeze from the north, and had moved slowly towards the lee side of Dominica, where part of the French fleet were still becalmed.

The second action between de Vaudreuil and Hood lasted from 12.14 to 1.45 and, as the British centre began to come up in support, de Grasse ordered his fleet to work to windward.

Some long-range firing took place between the British centre

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur off Guadeloupe, April 16, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

1782 and part of the French fleet, but it was of no consequence and Rodney forbade some of his ships to return the fire in order not to waste ammunition.

That night the British fleet lay-to to repair the damage in Hood's van division and the van and rear changed stations in the line. In the meantime the French convoy had made its way to Guadeloupe and de Grasse had obtained freedom to manœuvre. Rodney was thus faced with a new situation. In the evening he wrote to Hood to inform him of his intention to lay-to for the night and look into Guadeloupe in the morning, in the hopes of arriving at the French rendezvous before de Grasse. He asked for Hood's views. Hood replied that, whilst he thought the plan of making for the rendezvous was sound, he was of opinion that, so long as de Grasse could be kept in sight, the fleet should remain concentrated and every endeavour made to work to windward.

Next morning the pursuit of de Grasse began. At daylight  
April 10 on the 10th the French fleet were about fourteen miles to windward, and that night Rodney ordered a 'general chase' so as to free his ships from their rigid formation and allow them to make the best use of their sailing power.

But, despite these efforts to obtain contact, the distance between the fleets had, if anything, increased when day broke on  
April 11 the 11th.

De Grasse's plan was working well, but his luck was to fail him before the day was over.

Two of the French ships, which had been damaged in the fighting on the 9th, dropped to leeward during the day, and de Grasse had to decide whether to run down to their assistance or keep his distance from Rodney. He chose the former alternative and, as he closed, Rodney called in his cruisers and formed up his fleet in line of battle.

It was late in the day before the lines were formed and neither Admiral sought night action. De Grasse lost a great deal of ground by this manœuvre, but he still held the windward position, and, as it was evident by this time that he could outsail his opponent, he still hoped to carry out his plan. But the fates were  
April 12 against him. At two o'clock in the morning of the 12th the

*Zélé* and the flagship *Ville de Paris* collided, and as the former lost her foremast and bowsprit it was necessary to tow her clear of the fleet. The *Astrée*, frigate, was ordered to take her in tow and shape course for Guadeloupe.

All that night the British fleet carried a press of sail, and at daylight next morning the crews were thrilled to find the *Zélé* and *Astrée* about six miles to leeward, and the main French fleet between twelve and fifteen miles on the port bow. Rodney saw at once that his chance had come.

'I had the happiness at daylight,' he wrote, 'to find my most sanguine desire was near being accomplished by my having it in my power to force the enemy to battle.'<sup>1</sup>

At 5.45 Rodney signalled to Drake now in the van to make more sail in order to gain the windward position, and at 5.50 he made the signal for line ahead two cables apart. Six minutes later he ordered Hood to detail ships to 'chase in the north' and attack the *Zélé* and *Astrée*, in the hope that de Grasse would move to their support. Hood accordingly ordered the *Monarch*, *Valiant*, *Centaur* and *Belliqueux* to quit the line and chase to the north, and de Grasse fell into the trap and ran down towards the crippled ship. (Diagram No. 20.)

At 6.15 Rodney made the signal for the fleet to form on a line of bearing N.N.E. to S.S.W., but at 6.33 altered this to the signal for line of battle ahead two cables apart.

About 7 o'clock the cruisers were ordered to close the battle-fleet, the *Monarch*, *Valiant*, *Centaur* and *Belliqueux* to rejoin, and all ships to close up to one cable distance apart.

The wind had held at S.E. and de Grasse, seeing he would soon be definitely to leeward, decided to form his line on the port tack to regain the weather gauge. The result was that the two fleets were soon heading for one another, the British in good order, but the French very scattered, with some ships as much as ten miles away from the main body.

A little later the wind backed to east and this assisted de Grasse in his endeavour to sail to windward of the British line. His leading ships crossed Rodney's line of advance and the clash

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Formidable at sea, April 14, 1782,'



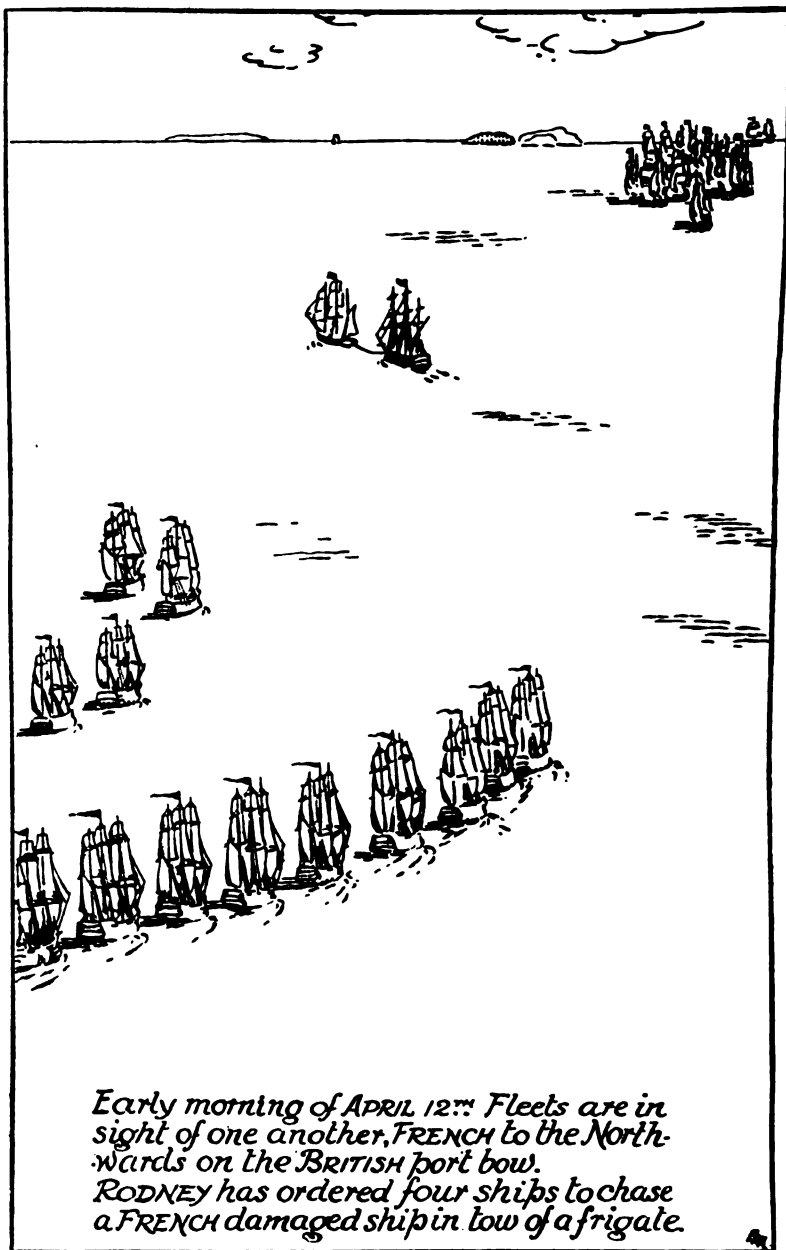


DIAGRAM 20.—BATTLE OF THE SAINTS, APRIL 12, 1782, 6 A.M.

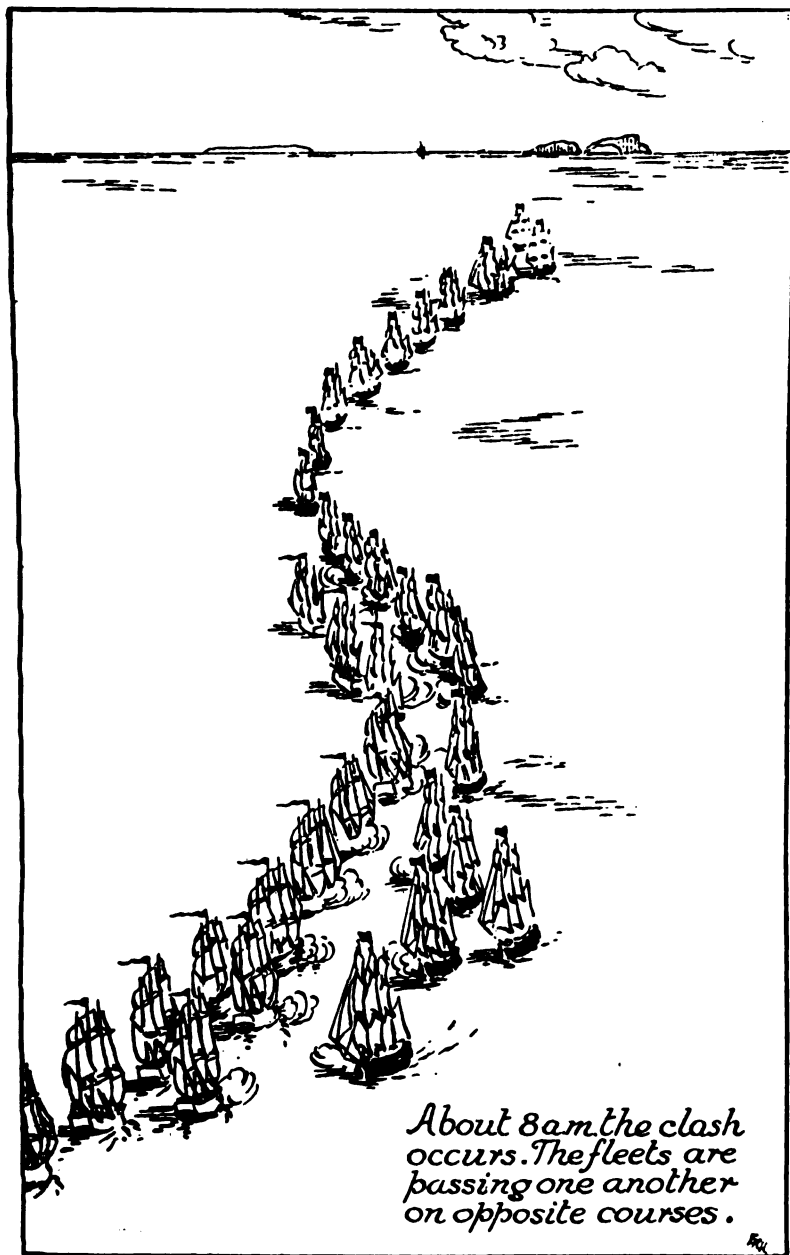


DIAGRAM 21.—BATTLE OF THE SAINTS, APRIL 12TH, 1782, 8 A.M.

1782 occurred when the leading British ship came in range of the sixth or seventh French ship. (Diagram No. 21.)

At 7.58 the first broadside was fired. At 7.59 Rodney made the signal for action. At 8.5 the signal for close action was flying at the masthead and the great battle had begun.

The leading British ship altered to port so as to pass down the French line on a parallel course and the remainder followed in succession, the intensity of the firing increasing as each ship came into range.

De Grasse, realising that, if he continued on the same course, his rear ships would have to withstand the broadsides of each successive British ship whilst his leading ships were out of the fight, altered course to starboard to bring his van into action and firing then became general all along the line. But the course he was steering was taking him all the time towards the calms in the lee of Dominica, and he knew that once he lost mobility he would have to fight it out with Rodney. In this quandary he endeavoured to turn his fleet to the northward and twice made a general signal to wear, but these signals could not be obeyed as the British line was within musket shot to leeward.

Both fleets maintaining their general line of advance, the ships passed slowly by one another, discharging their broadsides as fast as the guns could be loaded. Shortly after 9 o'clock the wind veered to the southward, and this compelled the French fleet to steer more to starboard and gave Rodney the great opportunity of his life. He at once gave orders to put the helm down and steer right through the enemy's line. In doing so, he passed within pistol shot of the *Glorieux*, the nineteenth in the French line, and that unfortunate ship received not only the full broadside of the flagship but the broadsides of five other ships that followed in the flagship's wake. (Diagram No. 22.)

Sir Gilbert Blane wrote of this stage of the action: 'We passed within pistol-shot of the *Glorieux* of seventy-four guns, which was so roughly handled that being shorn of all her masts, bowsprit and ensign staff but with the whole flag nailed to the stump of one of her masts breathing defiance as it were in her last moments, became a motionless hulk, presenting a spectacle which struck



DIAGRAM 22.—BATTLE OF THE SAINTS, APRIL 12TH, 1782, 9.15 A.M.

1782 our Admiral's fancy as not unlike the remains of a fallen hero, for being an indefatigable reader of Homer he exclaimed that now was to be the contest for the body of Patroclus.'<sup>1</sup>

Captain Alan Gardner of the *Duke*, the ship ahead of the flagship, on seeing Rodney's movement, also cut through the line, and this fine performance caused the bunching together of four French ships 'almost, if not quite, in contact with each other.'<sup>2</sup> These four ships had already suffered from the fire of the British van in the earlier stage of the action, and could make little reply when they were caught between the fire of Gardner's ship and Rodney's squadron.

Commodore Edmund Affleck in the *Bedford*, the sixth astern of Rodney, instead of following in the wake of his next ahead, emulated the fine example set by his Commander-in-Chief and also cut through the French line, passing close to the *César*, the twelfth from the van. He was followed by the twelve British rear ships, and, as they passed through, they shattered the *César* and the *Hector*. Hood's entry in his journal 'at noon the stern-most ships of my division still in action' shows that shortly after noon all the ships that had cut through were to windward of the enemy line.

As that part of the British fleet which had been ahead of the *Duke* had continued on their northerly course and the leading ships had run past the French line, Rodney, in order to concentrate his fleet, made them a signal to tack at 11.15. This signal was repeated at 11.33, and was followed at 12.30 by the signal to close. Captain James Saumarez of the *Russell*, the eleventh ship from the van, had already started in pursuit of the enemy on his own initiative and was thereby able to take a share in the defeat of the *Ville de Paris* at a later stage.

Meanwhile de Grasse had also decided to concentrate and signals were flying for the fleet to reform on the leewardmost ships.

As Rodney had hauled down the signal for 'line of battle' at 11 o'clock, Captains of ships were free to act on their own initiative, and the three divisions were soon running down to the westwards in chase of the French fleet. (Diagram No. 23.)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Charles Douglas' Narrative (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

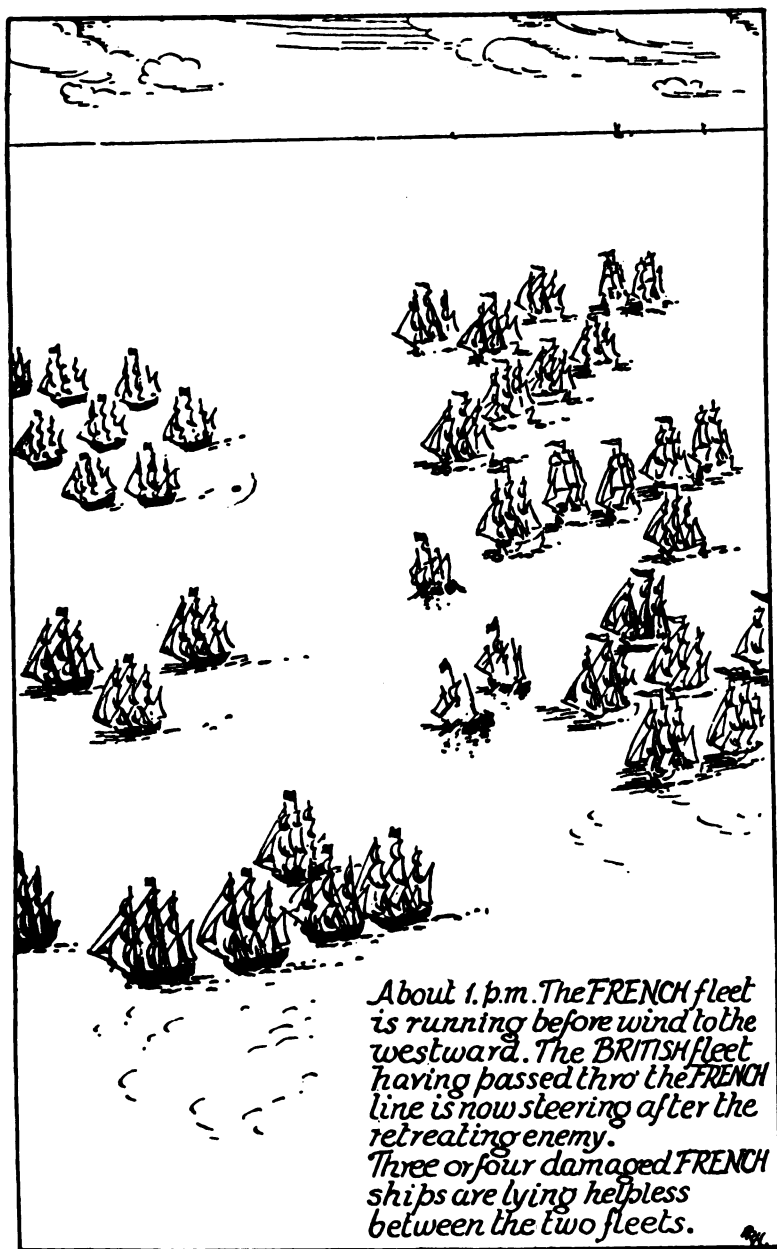


DIAGRAM 23.—BATTLE OF THE SAINTS, APRIL 12TH, 1782, NOON.

1782      There was only a light wind and, as a result of these manœuvres, the French cripples, *Glorieux*, *Hector* and *César*, were left unsupported in the path of the oncoming British columns. The concentration of gunfire was more than they could stand. The *Royal Oak* took possession of the *Glorieux*; the *Bedford* and *Centaure* compelled the *César* to strike; and the *Hector* submitted to the *Canada* and *Alcide*.

Rodney again made the signal for close action at 1 p.m. but he hauled it down at 1.32 and, as no signal to 'chase' was made and his own flagship was carrying easy sail, the pursuit became half-hearted.

Hood, confident that determined pursuit would result in the capture of a large number of the enemy, made repeated signals to his ships to make more sail and ordered the boats to be hoisted out to tow his own ship round in order to expedite matters. But the majority of the fleet were content to follow the Commander-in-Chief's motions.

Later in the day the *Ardent*, 64, dropped astern of the French fleet and struck to the *Bellicieux*, and about sunset the *Barfleur*, Hood's flagship, and the *Russell* came up with the *Ville de Paris*, the finest ship in the French Navy. Of this action Hood wrote, 'Observing the *Ville de Paris* to edge towards the *Barfleur* I concluded de Grasse had a mind to be my prisoner as an old acquaintance and therefore met his wishes by yawing towards him. As soon as I got within random shot he began to fire upon me which I totally disregarded till I was satisfied by firing a single gun from the quarter-deck that I was fairly within point blank, when I opened such a tremendous fire as he could not stand for more than ten minutes when he struck.'<sup>1</sup>

This was the last action of the day. At 6.45 Rodney ordered the fleet to bring to on the port tack, thus calling off the pursuit, whilst de Vaudreuil, now in command of the French fleet, continued his retreat.

In the annals of British Naval History there is no action which produced so much contemporary criticism and discussion

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, 'Barfleur off Guadeloupe, April 13, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

as the Battle of The Saints. The two principal subjects of controversy were whether Rodney had previously decided on the manœuvre of breaking the line under certain circumstances, and whether he was well or ill advised to call off the pursuit of the French fleet when he did. 1782

As regards the first of these much-debated questions, the French fleet were in considerable disorder at the time Rodney put his helm down to lead through and there was no breaking of the line such as was successfully performed by Nelson at Trafalgar. Furthermore, Commodore Affleck and Captain Gardner appear to have acted as they did from a quick and correct appreciation of the situation rather than from pre-arranged instructions given them by the Commander-in-Chief. Drake in the van made no attempt to cut through, and Hood, in his many letters, makes no comment on the manœuvre.

On the other hand, Sir Gilbert Blane records that about half an hour before the engagement began the situation was discussed at breakfast by Rodney, Douglas, the Captain of the ship, Lord Cranstoun, and the Secretary, and that 'the Admiral visibly caught the idea' of passing through the enemy's line and 'no doubt decided in his own mind at that moment to attempt a manœuvre at that time hitherto unpractised in naval tactics.'<sup>1</sup>

Richard Cumberland, the well-known writer, recorded in his memoirs that Rodney, when Germain's guest, discussed tactics at length and illustrated, by means of cherry stones, how he intended to break the line. Pamphlets were published stating that Sir Charles Douglas was the 'original suggester of this decisive manœuvre.' On the other hand, Cumberland wrote that Douglas told him he had been 'adverse to the experiment' and that on stating his objections to the Admiral he got no other answer but that 'his counsel was not called for: he required obedience only—he did not want advice.' And so the wordy battle waged for many years.

The most important point in this controversy, and one seldom, if ever, mentioned in the various letters, is that there is nothing on record to show that Rodney had confided to his juniors an

<sup>1</sup> Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*.



1782 intention of breaking the line. A new tactical idea thought of during a meal, half an hour before the firing of the first broadside, might have been put into execution if an adequate signalling system had been in use. With such a system, the manoeuvre could have been described to the whole fleet at the chosen moment. But there was no such system, nor was any signal made. Drake, an able man, made no attempt to break through. Affleck and Gardner broke through, but Rodney was very fortunate in having two such men in his fleet at the critical moment.

The contemporary historian, Dr. Beatson, who probably voiced the opinion of many of Rodney's critics, suggested that, in sailing through the gap with six ships, Rodney risked a separation of the fleet which might have had unfortunate consequences. This criticism was not well-founded. The British fleet was to leeward at the time and the ships that cut through gained the weather position with all its advantages. If Gardner and Affleck had not acted as they did, Rodney's manoeuvre would still have assisted much towards the discomfiture of the enemy.

As to the failure to pursue, the two points of view can be clearly seen in Hood's letters and Rodney's paper entitled 'Reasons for not pursuing the enemy after the victory.'

Hood was 'exceedingly disappointed in and mortified at the Commander-in-Chief' for not making the signal for a general chase; 'had he so done (as I did with my division in the only mode I could), I am very confident we should have had twenty sail of the enemy's ships of the line before dark.' He goes on to say that the French fleet should never have been lost sight of, that the pursuit should have continued during the night, and that it was the taking of the *Ville de Paris* that put a stop to Rodney's activity. 'So soon as the *Ville de Paris* had struck, Sir George's faculties seem to have been benumbed, farther than respected that ship alone; and I am every day more and more convinced, by the declaration of officers then on board the *Formidable*, that the *Ville de Paris* being taken was the sole occasion for the fleet being brought to and laying to all night.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, 'Barfleur off Guadeloupe, April 13, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

At sunrise on the 13th, Hood went on board the *Formidable* to try and persuade Rodney to pursue the enemy. Rodney 'appeared most perfectly satisfied' at the suggestion and gave the necessary orders in Hood's hearing, but changed his mind after Hood had left.<sup>1</sup> 1782

When Hood lamented that the signal to 'chase' had not been made, Rodney replied 'Come, we have done very handsomely.' This was far from Hood's opinion. 'Sir George seems to be satisfied,' he wrote, 'with having done enough as probably to save Jamaica and keep his popularity alive. But, Good God, not to avail himself of the manifest advantage his most complete victory gave him is not to be thought of with any degree of temper. We might as easily have taken the whole of the French fleet as we did the five sail which would most effectually and substantially have retrieved all the misfortunes of poor old England, have set her on tiptoe and have humbled France in the extreme. . . .'<sup>2</sup> 'Sooner than undergo a continuance what I have so very painfully done for several weeks past, I would be content to be placed on a Welsh mountain to gather buttons as they drop from a goat's tail.'<sup>3</sup> There is much more in the same strain from Hood's pen, and it must have been very mortifying to a man of his active mind to see the pursuit called off.

But Hood was extremely prone to overstatement, more particularly in his private correspondence, and we cannot accept his views without further examination.

His opinion that twenty sail should have been taken before dark cannot be brought into line with the fact that, despite his individual efforts, he was only able to come up with the *Ville de Paris*, a damaged ship, at sunset.

During the 10th and 11th the French ships had proved that they could outsail their opponents and their slight superiority in speed must have been greatly to their advantage after the

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, 'Barfleur off Guadeloupe, April 16, 1782' (N.R.S. vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur off Guadeloupe, April 16, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

<sup>3</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur off Isle Navassa, April 30, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

1782 turn to the west ; furthermore, there was then an additional incentive to crowd on every stitch of canvas.

On the other hand the very fact that the few ships, which continued the chase in the afternoon, did come up with French stragglers, is evidence that Rodney, in calling off the general chase when he did, failed to take full advantage of the situation.

Hood lost no opportunity of reminding Rodney of his views and, when in pursuit of de Vaudreuil, some days after the action wrote ' It is a very mortifying circumstance to relate to you, Sir, that the French fleet which you put to flight on the 12th (twenty-six in number including frigates) went through the Mona Channel on the 18th only the day before I was in it.' <sup>1</sup>

The implication is obvious, but the relative positions of the fleets on the 18th was no criterion of what their relative positions would have been during the previous six days if the chase had continued. It is unlikely that de Vaudreuil continued to press on under full sail after the British fleet had dropped out of sight. He probably took the opportunity of repairing damage to masts and yards. Furthermore, the direction and force of the wind that the French fleet experienced during the six days would have to be known before any conclusions could be drawn.

The responsibility for the strategy after the battle was Rodney's alone. As Commander-in-Chief, he could not share credit for success or blame for failure with any other person, and we must therefore examine his paper before accepting Hood's view that the pursuit should have continued through the night.

Rodney's paper <sup>2</sup> begins by pointing out that his ships were much crippled and as the enemy went off in a ' close connected body ' those of his ships that came up with them during the night might be defeated in detail. ' I had reason to conclude that they would have done more damage to each other than to the enemy during a night action and considering the very great fatigue they had undergone during the battle of a whole day.' He then makes a picture of the enemy detaching a few ships showing lights to lead his ships in the wrong direction and the remainder beating

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Rodney, ' *Barfleur at sea*, April 22, 1782 ' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

<sup>2</sup> Given in full in Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*.

back to windward, recapturing the prizes, and then proceeding to the conquest of Antigua, Barbados and St. Lucia whilst his ships, on account of the state of their spars, would have to go down to leeward to Jamaica. 'Though Jamaica might have been saved, the Windward islands might have been lost.'

Rodney's written explanation of the reasons that actuated his strategy appeared a long time after the event, and therefore may not give a faithful account of what passed through his mind on the battlefield. None the less it is deserving of close study as it gives an answer, no doubt a considered one, to those of his critics who maintained he should have sought night action.

He does not, however, enter into any explanation of his conduct of the fleet during the afternoon. In the evening, when de Vaudreuil had succeeded in collecting some of his ships, the French fleet may have appeared from the quarterdeck of the *Formidable* to be in a 'close connected body' but, when the pursuit slackened early in the afternoon, the French fleet was widely scattered.

As to fighting at night, the fleets were in sight of one another when dark came on, and no doubt there were many officers and men who, with memories of their fight with the Spaniards still fresh, were eagerly preparing for another hand-to-hand struggle in the dark. They were under the same Commander-in-Chief, there had been no mistaking friend for foe when they were first put to the test, and the prize was far greater. On the other hand, there was no lee shore and the French ships, with an illimitable stretch of ocean before them, and slightly superior sailing qualities, would not have found difficulty in throwing off their pursuers.

But Rodney is far from convincing when he comes to appreciate what the enemy might have done after the battle. The French fleet was under all the disadvantages of a sudden transfer of the command to a junior officer and it was hardly the moment to credit a beaten fleet with such power to recuperate and plan offensive operations with new objects. Certainly no justification for these suppositions could be found in the previous conduct of French commanders. Yet there is much truth in Rodney's contention that if he had moved far to leeward whilst the enemy

1782 worked to windward, the results of his victory would have been minimised.

With these arguments before us, it is possible to express an opinion on this tangled and controversial page of history.

If Rodney had signalled the 'general chase' when the fleets were heading to the west after the breaking of the line and had kept the signal flying throughout the afternoon, he would have done all that was in his power during daylight to complete the discomfiture of the enemy. There are no grounds for making a definite assumption that, had he done so, his ships would have overtaken more of the retreating Frenchmen; indeed, the evidence, if anything, points to the contrary. But the possibility was there and Rodney had often shown in the past that he was not a man who would let slip any opportunity of getting to close grips with an enemy.

There can be little doubt that fatigue of mind or fatigue of body prevented him following up his success with his accustomed vigour. We know that he was a martyr to gout and other ailments and the strain of those prolonged operations must have told on a man of his age and health. He cannot have found many opportunities for sleep or rest since the morning of the 8th, when he saw his frigates flying the fateful signal. It is easy to exaggerate the importance of his famous remark to Hood. He was probably trying to calm down his angry junior. Nevertheless, those words 'Come, we have done very handsomely' would never have passed the lips of the Rodney of the Seven Years War, or the Rodney who defeated Don Langara and worked so hard to bring de Guichen to close action.

As to Rodney's conduct of the fleet subsequent to the battle, whilst there are no good grounds for questioning his decision to avoid night action, it is a matter for surprise that he made no attempt to obtain intelligence of the French fleet after sunset. His fears of an enemy ruse to draw him to leeward, his fears for the safety of the Windward Islands, his fears that his prizes would be retaken, all could have been dispelled if he had taken steps to keep in touch with the enemy during the dark hours. Furthermore the means were at hand. On previous occasions he had

found no difficulty in keeping touch by means of frigates and it is surprising that it did not occur to him to do so again. 1782

It is in this failure to keep touch that we find grounds for criticising Rodney's handling of the situation. If he had chased until sunset and then flung forward his frigates to watch and report the movements of the French fleet, so that he could follow as soon as the prizes were secured, even Hood would have been unable to find cause for complaint. The tangible results might have been no different, the campaign might have run the same course, but Rodney could never have been accused of having been content with a partial victory.

It is popularly supposed that this battle ended the war and broke the French sea power. Rodney himself held this opinion. 'I am of opinion,' he wrote, 'that the French will not face us again this war, for the ships which have escaped us are so shattered and their loss of men so great that I am sure they will not be able to repair or replace either in the West Indies. Had it not been for this fortunate event, Jamaica had been done.'<sup>1</sup> Hood was nearer the truth when he wrote in his captious style on the 30th, 'Now had Sir George Rodney's judgment after the enemy had been so totally put to flight bore any proportion to the high courage, zeal and exertion so very manifestly shown by every captain, officer and man under his command in battle, all difficulty would now have been at an end. We might have done just as we pleased and instead of being at this hour on the defensive, a force might have been preparing to return to the Windward Islands for the purpose of attacking the enemy's possessions there,'<sup>2</sup> and again on the 12th of May, 'Had Sir George done what he might and ought we should all most probably have been peaceably at home by our firesides in the course of another year. . . . Now, the whole business will be to come over again.'<sup>3</sup>

Though the big fleets did not meet in battle again, the

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Lady Rodney, 'At sea off Guadeloupe, April 13, 1782' (Mundy's *Life of Lord Rodney*).

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Barfleur off the Isle of Navassa, April 30, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

<sup>3</sup> Hood to Middleton, *Barfleur at sea, May 12, 1782* (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

1782 'business' of major operations continued for many long and weary months.

Although De Grasse had good reason to think that the fates conspired against him, but the unfortunate collision between his flagship and the *Zélé* was not the primary cause of his failure. His plans were radically unsound. His object was to concentrate with the Spanish fleet to leeward. If the British had not taken St. Lucia early in the war, and so obtained an anchorage in a good strategical position relative to the French main base at Fort Royal, success might have attended an attempt to achieve the object by evasion. But Rodney's frigates were always watching him, and Rodney's fleet was lying at anchor, ready to weigh at a moment's notice, only forty miles to the south. In his most optimistic mood, he can hardly have expected to sail away to the west, encumbered by a large convoy, without being challenged.

His second plan of attempting to outsail Rodney and then double back, after first obtaining freedom of movement by ordering the convoy into a protected anchorage, appears at first sight to be a sounder one. But in the days of sail the final result of such operations could never be accurately foreseen. Changes of wind, ocean currents, inability of slower ships to keep company with the fleet, all conspired against success however attractive plans appeared when plotted on the chart. Even if Rodney had lost touch when to windward of the islands, de Grasse would still have had to pick up his convoy, as no expedition against Jamaica could go forward till the supplies arrived for the army. He would then once more be compelled to proceed at a slow speed, and, if Rodney's frigates did not fail him, would have found the British fleet on his heels before he had got far on his way.

In the circumstances, de Grasse's only course of action was to accept the challenge, send off the convoy to the west, and decide the issue by battle. His fleet was practically equal in numbers and armament to the British fleet. A victory, or even partial victory resulting in the British ships suffering greater damage than the French, would have secured his object. If

he had chosen that course he would have sailed with only one intention—to bring Rodney to action. His officers and men would have known what was before them, and their morale would have been heightened. He could have kept his fleet in proper formation, and manœuvred it for one purpose—battle. In the event, neither his ships nor the personnel were prepared for a great battle. He sailed into action with his fleet in a disorganised and widely separated state, though he could have easily shortened sail and allowed the stragglers to get into their proper positions in the line. Forming as he did on the port tack was bound to lead him into calms behind Dominica where he was almost certain to be brought to a general action. Many of the senior French officers saw what was going to happen as soon as their fleet was committed to the south-easterly course. Later on his signals to 'wear' when the British fleet was close under the lee suggest that he had lost grasp of the situation. But the sudden change of wind really settled his fate as it forced his ships round to a westerly course, enabled the British ships to cut through, and dissipated any chance of the action being merely a passing-by one which was probably his object.

We must now follow the fortunes of the two fleets from the time Rodney signalled ships to heave to on the evening of the 12th.

The British fleet was becalmed for the next few days. On the 17th a breeze sprang up and Rodney told Hood he could take his division of ten of the line 'as far ahead as hull down.'<sup>1</sup> He added later that if Hood thought otherwise he could press on further than 'hull down' distance. With the remainder of the fleet, Rodney shaped course W.½.S., and gave a rendezvous on the south side of St. Domingo. Hood took advantage of this discretionary order and carried a press of sail for the Mona passage, where he hoped to intercept stragglers.

At dawn on the 19th, when off the west end of Porto Rico, a fireship acting as a lookout made the signal for a fleet in the north-west. Hood at once signalled 'General chase' and shortly after sunrise five sail were in sight from the masthead of the *Barfleur*.

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Hood, 'Formidable, April 17, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).



1782 After a long chase the strangers were made out to be two French ships of the line and three smaller vessels. These, seeing their danger, steered for the narrow channel between Porto Rico and Zacheo but were overtaken. The *Valiant* and *Belliqueux* accounted for the two ships of the line, *Jason* and *Caton*, both of sixty-four guns; the *Champion* took the sloop *Ceres*; and the *Magnificent* the frigate *L'Aimable*.

In parenthesis it is worth noting an interesting remark by Hood in his letter reporting this action. 'The *Caton* and *Jason* are very fine ships, almost new; were built at Toulon, which last twice as long as those built at Brest.'<sup>1</sup>

April 25 On the 25th Hood joined Rodney off the Isle La Vache, near the south-west end of San Domingo, and the whole fleet proceeded together as far as Cape Tiburon, where Hood was once more detached with twenty-five of the line to cruise, whilst Rodney with the remainder proceeded to Jamaica to refit.

Hood, whose task was to watch the enemy fleet at Cap François, badly felt the want of frigates as he only had one to act as eyes for his squadron. He was anxious about the enemy's next move. There were three possibilities. They might proceed with their project against Jamaica, or sail back to windward to attack the British possessions there, or proceed to America. He reckoned on a very formidable force at Cap François. He had received intelligence that thirteen Spanish and five French ships of the line and 8,000 Spanish troops were there on the 17th, awaiting de Grasse and, now that de Vaudreuil had joined with his twenty-five of the line, the total would be forty-three. But, as will be seen later, de Vaudreuil and Solano were not minded to undertake offensive operations and the French ships had not all arrived.

April 29 Rodney arrived at Port Royal, Jamaica, with his prizes on the 29th, and proceeded with the refitting of the fleet. In his letters he commented severely on the poor state of the dockyard. 'It is impossible for me not to represent to their Lordships that by the gross neglect and inattention in not keeping His Majesty's yard in this port in proper repair, it has proved of the greatest detriment to His Majesty's service and prevented that speedy

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Rodney, 'Barfleur at sea, April 22, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

re-equipment so very necessary at this critical moment.' <sup>1</sup> He 1782  
 also made arrangements for the homeward-bound convoys, and  
 on the 19th of May the first convoy sailed, escorted by the May 19  
 ninety-gun ship *Sandwich* and three frigates under command of  
 Sir Peter Parker. The Comte de Grasse was a passenger in the  
*Sandwich*.

On the 7th of May Rodney received news that four of de May 7  
 Vaudreuil's fleet were lying at Curaçoa in a shattered condition  
 and would shortly be sailing for Cap François, as there were no  
 facilities for refitting at the Dutch port. The same agent re-  
 ported that two Dutch ships of the line and a large number of  
 merchant ships were also in the harbour waiting to sail for home.  
 He at once ordered a fresh disposition of the fleet and stationed  
 Drake with six of the line off the Isle de Vache, Affleck with  
 six of the line off the east end of San Domingo, and Hood with  
 seven off Cape Nicolas. He himself remained at Jamaica as  
 'his constant and personal attendance' was required to prevent  
 great delay occurring in the work of refitting.<sup>1</sup>

But the ships at Curaçoa succeeded in evading these disposi-  
 tions. The four French ships anchored at Cap François on the  
 12th, and the Dutch convoy passed through the Mona passage  
 without being sighted.

Hood returned to Port Royal on the 21st, and Rodney, not May 21  
 being well, left to him the task of refitting the fleet. Hood, like  
 his chief, complained in his letters of the lack of artificers and stores.

The Combined fleet had made no sign of movement during  
 this period and there was probably much truth in the report  
 that the Spanish ships, who were ready for sea, would not sail  
 without French support. Hood wrote that there wasn't 'even  
 the appearance of any cordiality or scarce any intercourse  
 between the French and Spanish officers and seamen.'<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of June a homeward-bound convoy sailed  
 under escort of four French ships of the line, and on the 8th five June 8  
 French ships of the line sailed for Port au Prince, where they  
 joined two Spanish ships of the line.

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, 'Formidable, Port Royal, May 18, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Middleton, 'Barfleur at sea, May 12, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

1782      The force at Cap François then consisted of fourteen French and eleven Spanish ships of the line, 104 merchant vessels preparing for convoy, Don Galvez's Spanish army of 13,000 men quartered on shore, and a French army of 6,000 men quartered on shore and afloat. This was a force of great potentialities, but its fighting value was much reduced by the enormous amount of sickness amongst the troops.

Rodney, hearing that the seven enemy ships at Port au Prince were there with the object of escorting a convoy to Cap François, detached twelve of the line under Drake to control the line of communication between the two ports, but owing to severe weather the squadron was forced back into harbour.

July 1      On the 1st of July the Commander-in-Chief issued orders to Rear-Admiral Graves to take home the prizes and a large convoy under escort of three of the less serviceable ships of the line. All ships were ordered to rendezvous in Bluefields Bay. The story of that voyage home is a story of disaster. Soon after the convoy sailed it became evident that the prizes were in no condition to stand heavy weather. The *L'Ardent* had to return almost at once, the *Hector* lost company when a few days out, the *Caton* sprung a leak and had to be towed to Halifax. In the middle of September a great gale took a heavy toll of the remainder. The flagship *Ramillies* was wrecked, and the *Centaur*, the *Ville de Paris* and the *Glorieux* foundered with nearly all hands. Many ships of the convoy were also lost.

July 9      On the 9th of July Rodney issued his last orders. He had received no despatches from the Admiralty for a long time, but as 'His Majesty and the station shall not run the risque of almost half the fleet of Britain experiencing a hurricane' he decided to proceed with the greater part of the fleet to America, leaving Rowley with a force to protect Jamaica. Rowley was directed 'in case Jamaica should be in danger to despatch his largest and best sailing frigate' to him or the Commander-in-Chief, North America, so that 'speedy succours' could be sent.<sup>1</sup>

His first concern was the safety of the great Jamaica convoy and the prizes, as the enemy were in force on the flank of their

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Formidable*, Port Royal, July 9, 1782.'

route through the Yucatan and Florida Channels. A recent report that twenty-two sail of the line had been sighted on the 5th between Cap François and Tortuga convinced him that his first object should be to see the convoy safely through the danger zone. The enemy had publicly announced that the destination of the Combined fleet was Rhode Island, but Rodney guessed, and guessed correctly, that Solano would not leave the West Indies so long as he could make use of the good anchorage and refitting facilities of Havana. 1782

But, at the moment of writing his orders, Rodney did not know for certain where the combined fleet was cruising, and so had to trust to obtaining intelligence after leaving harbour. Hood was ordered to sail on the 10th and take up a watching position off Havana, Rowley to take his division to sea soon after, whilst the Commander-in-Chief intended to follow with the third division and the French prizes and act 'according to information received of the disposition and situation of the enemy, reinforcing the strength of the convoy escort, or, if occasion, proceeding with the greatest part of the fleet for their better protection.'<sup>1</sup> But he was not called on to deal with the new situation, for next morning his successor, Admiral Pigot, arrived from England.

The supersession of Rodney at this critical moment was one of the many surrenders to political pressure that marred the actions of those responsible for the direction of the war. Nothing could have exceeded the bitterness with which the opposition attacked Sandwich during his tenure of office, yet one of their first actions after coming into power was to send Rodney a curt letter of recall and appoint Pigot in his place. There is no doubt that the decision was due to Rodney's political opinions. He had always been in great favour with Germain and the members of the previous government.

His biographer states that Keppel was opposed to the recall of Rodney, but for 'fear of giving umbrage in a certain high quarter' did not resign in protest.<sup>2</sup> Pigot was appointed before Lord Cranstoun arrived with the despatches reporting the Battle

<sup>1</sup> Rodney's Despatch, '*Formidable*, Port Royal, July 9, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Admiral Viscount Keppel* (Keppel).

1782 of The Saints. On receiving the despatches, the Board hurried off a messenger to Plymouth to stop Pigot sailing but he arrived too late. Though this was perhaps unfortunate for the Government, it in no way excused a flagrant piece of political jobbery. On hearing of the appointment, Germain wrote to a correspondent — 'Admiral Pigot is a bold man to supersede so successful a commander. The measure is much abused and the Ministers risk their popularity by recalling the man who has retrieved the affairs of this country by his able and spirited conduct.'<sup>1</sup>

July 22 Rodney sailed for England on the 22nd of July, and had a great reception when he arrived home.

In May the Houses of Parliament voted their thanks to the Flag Officers, Captains, junior officers and lower deck ratings, and in June Rodney was created a peer and granted a perpetual pension of £2,000 a year. Hood was also created a peer and Drake and Affleck were made Baronets.

Pigot soon had his hands full, as the Combined fleet was definitely located at Havana, off which port Hood, in accordance with Rodney's orders, was cruising and waiting anxiously for the convoy to appear and for more information about the enemy.

Aug. 6 On the 6th of August he wrote, 'No convoy yet appears . . . I wish very much to get hold of a small coaster or two that we might know for certain whether Don Galvez with his troops came from the Cape (François) with Solano's squadron.' And on the 8th, 'No appearance as yet of the convoy. . . . Now the question is what can be Vaudreuil's plan with his ten sail of prime ships? He put to sea in company with Solano from the Cape; if he is gone to America he will have done his business before we can get there and be secure against any attack unless he can be met with in deep water. . . . Is it unlikely that Vaudreuil as well as Solano may have had an eye upon the Jamaica convoy and the captured French line of battle ships?'<sup>2</sup> He also wrote down his views on the best dispositions under the circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Germain to General Irwin, June 22, 1782 (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Middleton, '*Barfleur* off the Havana, August, 1782' (N.B.S. vol. xxxiii.).

He would direct a flag officer with ten or eleven ships to cruise about 130 miles south-east of Bermuda for sixteen or eighteen days and then repair to New York. The remainder would see the convoy safe through the Gulf of Florida and then proceed to New York, reconnoitring the Chesapeake on the way. If the enemy were not found on the American coast the whole fleet would return south and divide into two squadrons, one to cruise off Cap François, and the other between the Caicos Bank and Inagua to prevent Solano effecting junction with de Vaudreuil. 1782

Hood has been quoted at some length in order to show the 'fog of war' that existed at this time, and the truth of his view that the Battle of The Saints did not break the enemy's power and leave the British fleet in full command of the lines of communication.

The convoy eventually joined on the 14th of August, and was seen safely on its homeward voyage. Pigot then decided to sail north to New York, but dilatory methods became the order of the day and five or six prizes in tow were kept in company with the fleet. Aug. 14

Hood had little opinion of Pigot's capability to command. 'His situation,' he wrote, 'is much to be pitied having no one about him capable of affording wholesome advice which, without the smallest imputation to him as he has been so long on land and never hoisted his flag or commanded a squadron before, I should think could not be unwelcome.'<sup>1</sup>

The fleet dawdled on towards New York until the 23rd, when a schooner from Charleston spoke the flagship and informed the Admiral that she had sighted a French squadron on the 1st of the month in Lat. 38° 10', steering to the northward. This news put some energy into Pigot, and, dropping the prizes, he pressed on towards New York, as he realised the French fleet might have already arrived there to co-operate with Washington's army. Aug. 23

On the 29th a ship four days out from New York was spoken and, as she had news of the French fleet's arrival at Boston, immediate fears for the safety of Carleton's troops were dispelled. Aug. 29

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Not yet through the Gulf of Florida, August 21, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

1782  
Sept. 5      The British fleet anchored in New York harbour on the 5th of September, but no operations were undertaken against de Vaudreuil.

Pigot's orders were that he was to remain in North America until the first full moon in October or so long as the enemy's fleet continued in American waters, and that on his return to the Leeward Islands he was to 'leave a superiority to the naval force of the enemy remaining in North America.' He was content to remain in harbour despite Hood's entreaties to take the offensive against the French fleet.

Oct.          In the middle of October Pigot decided to sail for Barbados and leave Hood, with twelve of the line, to watch de Vaudreuil from New York. Hood, at once wrote and suggested that half the fleet should proceed direct to Bermuda and then look into St. Lucia and Antigua, whilst the other half should proceed to Halifax to water and then reconnoitre Boston. But Pigot did not see eye to eye with his active-minded junior and ordered him to remain at New York so long as the weather permitted.

Oct. 24      The Commander-in-Chief sailed on the 24th.

Nov. 10      On the 10th of November a despatch vessel arrived from Jamaica with important news from Admiral Rowley. One of his frigates had captured a schooner bound from Havana to Cap François, and, amongst the letters found on the prisoners, was one containing information that the Spanish fleet intended to join the French fleet at Cap François at the end of October for a joint attack on Jamaica, and that a similar attack on Bermuda was contemplated. The British commanders had at last some definite information to act upon and Hood at once gave orders to prepare for sea with all despatch, whilst Carleton sent orders to Lieutenant-General Leslie, commanding at Charleston, to send 1,500 troops to Jamaica.

When Hood announced his intention of sailing, Admiral Digby, the Commander-in-Chief, expressed anxiety for the safety of New York, but he did not issue contrary orders though, as on a previous occasion, he refused to reinforce Hood with his own ships. He had recently received definite intelligence that

de Vaudreuil would not be in a condition to sail till the middle of December at the earliest and that all the French troops in America were making their way to Boston to embark in the fleet, but though Hood 'was going in quest of an enemy of equal or probably of much superior force'<sup>1</sup> he was unwilling to allow his own ships out of his sight. 1782

Hood, with his twelve of the line, sailed on the 22nd and took up a position off Old Cape to intercept any ships making for Cap François. On the 4th of December he received further intelligence that an 'express' had arrived at Cap François on the 30th of October with orders to prepare for the reception of 10,000 men who were arriving shortly under escort of fifteen of the line. He was faced with a serious situation. His latest information was that three large enemy squadrons, one from Europe, another from Havana, a third from Boston, were heading for Cap François to concentrate for major operations. No wonder he wrote, 'By the account you will herewith receive I stand a chance to be abominably thrashed.'<sup>2</sup> Nov. 22 Dec. 4

He at once threw out frigates (amongst which was the *Fury* commanded by Captain Smith, afterwards Sir Sidney Smith, the defender of Acre), but it was not until the 19th of January that he received definite news of the enemy squadrons, when he heard that de Vaudreuil, with ten of the line, had been off San Juan, Porto Rico, on the 16th. He immediately started in pursuit but made little headway as the wind and current were against him. 1783 Jan. 19

On the 24th he received later news from a French ship that de Vaudreuil had left San Juan and sailed to the west, so he at once shaped course to follow, but failing get in touch returned to Port Royal on the 6th of February to refit and revictual his ships. During these operations a frigate reported sighting the Franco-Spanish fleet near Caicos Island and gave the numbers as fifteen of the line. The ships sighted were the transports from Charleston proceeding to Jamaica, and Hood, commenting on the mistake, wrote :— 'This will show you what sad consequences may arise Jan. 24 Feb. 6

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Digby, ' *Barfleur*, Staten Island, November 11.'

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Pigot, ' *Barfleur*, December 4, 1782, Cape Samara, N.W. 20 leagues.'



1783 from a loose report of a fleet that is not looked at near enough to ascertain with certainty whether it consists of men of war or merchant ships.' <sup>1</sup>

Mar. 21 He was at sea again as soon as possible endeavouring to locate Solano and de Vaudreuil, and, on the 21st of March received definite intelligence from a frigate that the Spanish fleet had been sighted on the 8th, working through the Gulf of Florida. 'This put us in high spirits,' he wrote, 'in hopes fortune would enable us to make a glorious finish in the war.' <sup>2</sup> But before that hoped for meeting occurred he received orders from home to stop hostilities. The long war was over and course was shaped for Havana in order that Prince William might 'see the first city in the West Indies.' <sup>2</sup>

The operations which took place after the Battle of The Saints receive little notice in naval histories, for the great battle is popularly supposed to have ended the war. They are, however, of interest for several reasons.

It is quite clear that Pigot, Digby and Hood, though not actually on the defensive, were compelled to adjust their dispositions by those of the enemy and were not imposing their will on Solano or de Vaudreuil. The Franco-Spanish plan of concentrating again at Cap François for the attack on Jamaica was a sound one, but it fell through for want of energy and good co-operation. Hood was not nearly strong enough to perform the task of preventing this concentration, and it is difficult to understand why Pigot kept so many ships on the Windward Island station. Even if an enemy squadron was expected from Europe, Pigot could have spared some of his twenty-four of the line to reinforce Hood in his difficult position.

He had been reinforced by a squadron under Sir Richard Hughes in December, but was loth to allow any ships to go down to leeward.

'I hope you will let me have accounts, as often as possible' he wrote to Rowley, 'as you may be well assured I shall give you

<sup>1</sup> Hood to Middleton, '*Barfleur* off Monte Christe, February 1, 1783' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Middleton, '*Barfleur* at sea, April 9, 1783' (N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.).

every assistance in my power for the protection of the Island of Jamaica, but must beg you will be well founded in your information before you call the fleet to leeward as it will leave all His Majesty's possessions here in the utmost danger. If the Spaniards and French have failed at Gibraltar there cannot be a doubt that they will employ that great fleet elsewhere. I have not a doubt many will come to this part of the world.'<sup>1</sup> Hood evidently expected Pigot to join him when the enemy fleets were located. In November he wrote, 'Admiral Pigot will probably think it right to come to leeward'<sup>2</sup> and in December, 'Admiral Pigot whom I expect to see or hear from hourly.'<sup>3</sup> But he realised that Pigot could not leave the Windward Islands unprotected and in January wrote that he was 'perfectly sensible of the feeble state our islands to windward are in,'<sup>4</sup> and agreed that a force must be retained to windward.

Pigot was evidently not the man for the post of Commander-in-Chief. 'Do you think, my good friend,' wrote Hood, 'a certain noble Viscount has acted upon true patriotic principles, as real friend to his poor distracted country in placing an officer at the head of so great a fleet so very unequal to the very important command for want of practice.'<sup>5</sup> Very severe criticism, but that it was not far from the truth is evident from the lethargic passage to New York and the damping down of all energy once Pigot took over the command.

The British Admirals would have been faced with a still more serious situation if the peace negotiations had fallen through, for, despite the previous reverses, the French and Spanish Ministries had agreed on joint operations against Jamaica on a large scale in 1783. D'Estaing was nominated for the command of a combined fleet of fifteen Spanish and fifteen French ships of the line, which was to concentrate with the squadrons under de Vaudreuil and Solano. Arrangements were also made to send

<sup>1</sup> Pigot to Rowley, '*Formidable*, Carlisle Bay, Barbadoes, November 30, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Hood to Rowley, 'at sea, November 26, 1782.'

<sup>3</sup> Hood to Rowley, '*Barfleur* off Monte Christi, December 12, 1782.'

<sup>4</sup> Hood to Pigot, '*Barfleur* off Monte Christi, January 9, 1782.'

<sup>5</sup> Hood to Jackson, 'Not yet through the Gulf of Florida, August 21, 1782' (N.R.S., vol. iii.).

1783 out a large number of troops, but all orders were cancelled when it was evident peace was not far off.

Before taking final leave of Rodney, Hood, Rowley and those many other adventurous spirits who fought in the five phases of the Battle for the Islands, we may pause for a moment to reflect on the remarkable influence exercised by those islands on the strategy of the war. The closing scenes have been described under the title 'Final Phase,' and the inhabitants of the islands must have prayed that some finality had at last been reached, and that they were free to pursue their normal life for many years. But the end of their troubles was still a long way off, for, with the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War, the thunder of broadsides once more disturbed the tropical waters. Peace was not for them till England and France had finally buried the hatchet.

And yet how many in the home countries knew anything about these famous islands? To how many did the names of Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, convey anything beyond a vague idea of some strange lands a long way below the horizon? How many of the pressed men brought back to their villages any information about the islands beyond a few odd-sounding names and reminiscences of escapades in the small townships? Accurate knowledge was probably confined to a few merchants in the City of London and a certain number of Government officials. Yet their magnetic effect was such that the most efficient fleets and the most distinguished leaders were employed on the Windward Islands station throughout the war.

If we only consider each phase by itself we can find good reasons for the strategy employed. Possession of the islands meant great wealth and it was natural for their owners to guard them jealously. Furthermore, every fresh conquest supplied one more valuable pawn to bargain with at the peace conference. But if we look at the war as a whole and place the island campaigns in their correct perspective, we must come to the conclusion that these oversea possessions exercised a malign influence on the strategy of the Allied Powers. France and Spain obtained a large annual revenue from the islands and it has been estimated

that two-thirds of French exports and imports crossed the Atlantic. They could not therefore afford to regard the West Indies as a theatre of minor importance when framing their plans, but together they could command overpowering strength in European waters, after detaching an adequate force to co-operate with the American colonists, and the most certain method of protecting the islands and cross-Atlantic trade was to obtain control of British naval movements in the Eastern Atlantic. Fighting for the islands, for the sake of the islands, however successful, could never have brought final victory, but full force used on and around the coasts of England might have ended the war in a very short time. 1783

## CHAPTER XXI

### EUROPEAN WATERS, 1782

1782    **WHILST** Rodney and Hood were fighting in the West Indies, the Grand Fleet under Lord Howe was by no means idle. The Dutch fleet was still in being, and Howe was also responsible that reinforcements and convoys for the East and West Indies were free from interference until clear of the danger zone. He was fortunate in his divisional commanders, and had no hesitation in detaching squadrons under Barrington and Kempenfelt when intelligence of enemy movements in the Atlantic was received.

**Feb.**     Early in February Commodore Sir Richard Bickerton sailed from Portsmouth for the East Indies with six of the line and a large number of transports carrying 4,800 troops. De Guichen, who had taken his squadron to Cadiz in January to join the Spanish fleet, was ordered to intercept Bickerton. He sailed with a combined Franco-Spanish fleet of seventeen of the line, but Bickerton fortunately received intelligence of the movement in time to give the coast a wide berth.

**Mar.**     In March news was received that the French were preparing

**April 20** a fleet at Brest for the East Indies, and, early in April, Barrington sailed from Spithead to intercept it. On the 20th, when sixty miles N.E. of Ushant, a frigate reported sighting enemy vessels and Barrington at once ordered his squadron to chase. By sunset the enemy could be distinguished as three or four men-of-war and about seventeen merchant vessels. During the night Captain John Jervis of the *Foudroyant* attacked the seventy-four gun ship *Pégase* and, after a severe fight, captured her. The action was fought with great gallantry and Jervis well deserved his knighthood.

Next morning the *Actionnaire*, a sixty-four gun ship armed

en flûte, surrendered to the *Queen*, Captain Maitland, and proved 1782  
a most valuable prize. She was carrying over 500 soldiers and  
a large quantity of lower masts, sails, rigging and naval stores  
for the French East Indies squadron. Twelve of the convoy  
were also taken. Barrington anchored again at Spithead on  
April the 26th after this successful operation. April 26

In May Kempenfelt sailed with seven of the line and remained  
at sea a month but did not fall in with any enemy squadrons.

But the fleet even in this, the last, year of the war was not in  
an efficient condition.

On the 22nd of April Howe wrote to the Admiralty, ' Their  
Lordships are already apprised of the deficiencies of men in this  
part of the squadron and as the state of the other ships fitting  
at this port is not in such progress that my present stay here  
can, as I conceive, be of any special utility, I propose to return to  
London.' <sup>1</sup> A fortnight later he received orders to send a frigate  
to obtain intelligence of a French convoy and replied he was  
sending the *Success*, 'the only frigate under my orders at this  
port.' <sup>2</sup>

For a long time intelligence had been coming through of great  
activity in the Dutch dockyards. It was eventually discovered  
that the Dutch Government had agreed to co-operate with their  
allies in a big naval effort and that the general plan was a con-  
centration of French, Spanish and Dutch ships off Brest, as a  
preliminary to seizing control of the sea communications to  
England.

Early in May the Dutch fleet of eleven of the line assembled  
in the Texel under command of Vice-Admiral Hartzink, and on  
the 10th Howe sailed from Spithead, also with eleven of the line, May 10  
to cruise off the Dutch coast. But ' An epidemic disorder called  
the influenza ' caused great havoc amongst his crews and, as  
Hartzink showed no signs of moving, he returned to Spithead,  
leaving Sir John Ross to watch the enemy with a small squadron.

The Armed Neutrality prevented the full exercise of sea-  
power against the Dutch. Ships sailed in and out of the Dutch

<sup>1</sup> Howe's letter to Admiralty, ' *Victory*, Spithead, April 22, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Howe's letter to Admiralty, ' *Victory*, Spithead, May 4, 1782.'

1782 harbours under neutral flags as they pleased and the British Government dared not give orders to take action against them.

Howe's next task was to prepare his fleet for the expected appearance of the combined Franco-Spanish fleet in the Channel.

In accordance with the agreed plan, de Guichen and Cordova sailed from Cadiz in the beginning of June, expecting to be joined by ships from Brest and Rochefort and the Dutch contingent of ten of the line. These reinforcements would bring the fleet up to fifty-four sail of the line, a far more powerful force than the  
June 24 British Admiral could put to sea with. On the 24th the Combined fleet fell in with an outward bound British convoy for Newfoundland and Quebec and captured eighteen ships. The Brest squadron of eight ships in command of La Motte-Picquet joined a few days later and the fleet then numbered forty ships of the line. The Dutch fleet, owing to the movements of Howe and Sir John Ross, failed to keep their part of the bargain. The Combined fleet then proceeded to its cruising ground between Ushant and the Scillies.

On the same day as the convoy was captured, Howe ordered out his frigates to obtain intelligence of the reported enemy concentration. Four frigates were ordered to 'watch the motions of the combined fleet lately assembled at Cadiz and supposed to be now sailed or nearly ready to put to sea from that port to the northward, and very probably intended for Brest.' If the fleet was found to be still in port, a strict watch was to be kept. The frigate captains were told that 'the special purpose of these instructions is to acquire such material and timely information as may be of the greatest moment in the conduct of His Majesty's service. You are not to suffer your ship to be unnecessarily engaged with the enemy subjecting you thereby to be disabled or disappointed in the execution of that more important trust.'<sup>1</sup> In drafting these orders, Howe doubtless had in mind the many occasions on which frigate captains, carrying vital despatches, had been deflected from their object on sighting enemy vessels which they thought could be easily taken.

Shortly after the frigates sailed, and before any intelligence

<sup>1</sup> Howe's secret orders to frigates, 'June 24, 1782.'

of the combined fleet had been received, the Admiralty ordered Howe to proceed to sea as the great Jamaica convoy, escorted by ships in command of Sir Peter Parker, was expected daily at the entrance to the Channel. The fleet of twenty-two sail of the line cleared from St. Helen's on the 30th of June. On the 1st of July a Danish galliot was spoken, and her captain reported that he had recently passed through a fleet of fifty-six ships, large and small, forty-eight miles west of Ushant. On the same day another neutral reported that the combined fleet of thirty-six sail of the line had sailed from Cadiz on the 4th of June, and that she had recently sighted a big fleet 800 miles S.W. of Land's End. Howe had at last got the information he required. The enemy's great superiority did not for a moment shake his resolution to carry out his object. Three sail of the line joined him on his way down Channel, but even then he could only count on twenty-five ships against the enemy's forty.

Early on the morning of the 12th, when forty-five miles S.S.E. from the Scillies, he 'discovered to the westward the combined fleet of the enemy from Cadiz, united as I have reason to believe with the squadron from Brest, and consisting of about thirty-six ships of the line.'<sup>1</sup> The wind was north-west, and the combined fleet held the windward position. Faced with this situation, Howe took a bold decision. Thinking it 'proper to avoid coming to battle with them as then circumstanced,'<sup>1</sup> he shaped course to pass between the Scillies and Land's End 'to get to the windward of the enemy both for protecting the Jamaica convoy and to gain the advantage of situation for bringing them to action which the difference in our numbers renders desirable.'<sup>1</sup> At the same time he despatched a frigate to tell Parker to shelter in a west Ireland port.

Cordova and de Guichen, who had formed their line and prepared for battle, were completely puzzled by Howe's manœuvres. Nor was this surprising, as few fleet commanders would have attempted to take a large fleet between the Scillies and Land's End in those days, particularly at night.

Howe did not sight the Jamaica convoy, but by the 8rd of

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Victory off Scilly, July 12, 1782.'



1782 August had received intelligence that convinced him Parker had passed up Channel. His task was completed, and he anchored at Spithead on the 14th. In the meantime the Combined fleet had been cruising in the chops of the Channel, but had been driven out of position by a heavy gale just before the Jamaica convoy arrived.

At the end of July Cordova received orders from the King of Spain to return to south with the object of preventing the British fleet from relieving Gibraltar. The Spanish Government knew that an attempt to succour the hard-pressed defenders must soon be made if they were not to be left to their fate.

This, the last, abortive cruise of the Combined fleet, had many features similar to the earlier efforts. Once more we see great preparations to produce an overpowering force in the enemy's home waters, and when the concentration is completed, Admirals and Governments acting with no fixed object and no offensive spirit.

Shortly after the arrival of the Grand Fleet at Spithead news was received that Hartzink had at last put to sea. Commodore Hotham was at once ordered to proceed to the Downs with eight of the line to intercept the Dutch fleet. He was joined there by three more of the line and a few days later Vice-Admiral Mark Milbanke arrived with five of the line to take command. This concentration was soon found to be unnecessary as Hartzink, after seeing an East and a West India convoy clear to the north, had returned to harbour.

Sept. 1 On the 1st of September Howe received secret orders from the Admiralty to organise an expedition for the relief of Gibraltar.

Sept. 6 Milbanke rejoined on the 6th and the work of preparing the men-of-war and transports went on apace.

Middleton was of opinion that unnecessary delay occurred in preparing the fleet. In a letter to Shelburne he pointed out that an east wind was blowing when Milbanke returned, and that the whole force should have concentrated off the Isle of Wight and sailed for Gibraltar on the 6th. 'The wind has now changed, and the consequences, in every point of view, are fatal.'

It is not possible to judge this matter now, but it may be

remarked, in parenthesis, that the direction and force of the wind in the Channel was not necessarily the same as at Whitehall, a point sometimes forgotten in the sailing era. The letter is, however, of interest as Middleton added some pungent remarks on the Government administration. 'Can a nation whose business is managed in this way possibly succeed? Is it not necessary to make enquiry in the cabinet by calling for returns from ship's officers and see where the fault lies. Every neglect of service since I have been in office has originated in London. If the public officers, on whose orders every preparation and movement depends, are not diligent, regular, and punctual, it is of little consequence what your admirals and generals are. I have endeavoured to enforce this to great men by every means in my power, for these four years past, but nobody will understand it. I must therefore take the liberty of repeating to your Lordship that discipline, preparation, execution, success and even peace depends on early determination in the cabinet and punctuality in the public offices. It is said our constitution is not well calculated for war. I know of no reason why, but because men cannot be found to attend to business. This country must sink if they (public offices) are not properly filled and the heads of them made responsible. This last business is the worst managed of any in the whole war.'<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the ships were fitting out a terrible disaster occurred to the *Royal George*, Kempenfelt's 100-gun flagship. On the 29th of August the ship was being slightly careened, given a 'parliament heel' as it was called in those days, to put right some under-water defects. The method adopted was the usual one of running a number of guns from one side to the other to give the necessary heel. As the amount of heel was slight the officers and men were at their usual work and in addition a large number of wives, children, and friends of the crew were on board. Suddenly there was a cracking noise and she sank like a stone. The ship was so rotten that a piece of the bottom gave way under the strain. About 1,000 persons were drowned including the brilliant Kempenfelt.

<sup>1</sup> Middleton to Shelburne [not sent] September 11, 1782 (N.R.S. vol. xxxviii.).

1782 It was the irony of fate that Kempenfelt, who had done so much to reform abuses in the Navy, should have fallen victim to the shortcomings of corrupt administrations. The evidence of Vice-Admiral Mark Milbanke and Captain John Jervis, at the court martial that sat on the loss of the ship, proved clearly that it was known in the dockyard that her frames were in a rotten state and that she was quite unseaworthy. The traditional story of a breeze heeling the ship over until water entered the lower deck ports is not founded on fact.

Sept. 11 On the 11th of September Howe sailed from Spithead with thirty-four ships of the line, several frigates and 180 victuallers, storeships, transports and cargo vessels. A hundred of the latter were bound for different parts of the world and the remainder fitted out for the work of relief. But before following the fortunes of Howe, we must retrace our steps and pick up the story of the Spanish operations from the time the Duc de Crillon commenced his offensive against Fort St. Philip.

There was no British fleet to disturb the Minorca operations and, as no attempt was made to throw in fresh provisions, Murray's men were soon stricken down by disease. De Crillon approached with caution and, despite their dreadful plight, the garrison displayed a bravery and constancy that has hardly its equal in the history of the Army. But by the end of January only 600 men were in any degree fit for duty and for the majority of these the proper place was the hospital.

Feb. 4 General Murray was compelled to capitulate on the 4th of February. The scene is vividly described by Dr. Beatson. 'A spectacle so very tragical, and at the same time so glorious to the sufferers, was perhaps never before seen, as when the miserable remains of the brave garrison of Fort St. Philip marched out with the honours of war. The Spanish and French armies were drawn up opposite to each other, and formed a lane, for the passage of 600 emaciated, worn down, and decrepit soldiers, who were followed by a hundred and twenty of the artillery and two hundred seamen. He must have been devoid of every noble feeling, who, on this occasion, would not have felt a pang for these heroic veterans, who exclaimed, with tears in their eyes,

"that they surrendered their arms to God alone," and, at the same time, appeared to derive great consolation from the opinion, that the victors could not boast of their conquest, in taking an hospital.'<sup>1</sup> The siege had lasted five months and seventeen days. That no effort had been made to relieve the hardly-pressed and gallant garrison was a melancholy result of the weakness of the British Navy. 1782

The recovery of Minorca was one of the Spanish objects of the war and de Crillon's success placed him in high favour with the Spanish King. He was appointed to succeed General Alvarez in command of the army besieging Gibraltar and Don Bonaventura Moreno, who commanded the fleet that had co-operated with de Crillon, was also ordered to assist in the operations. During the early months of the year the Spaniards kept up a bombardment of the Rock without much result, and they were only too ready to seize on any new invention or proposal that might turn the tables on the gallant garrison.

The most promising suggestion came from a French engineer, Chevalier d'Arçon. He submitted designs for building floating batteries with an 'armoured' roof of thick hides, wooden sides of great thickness, and a special water system for dealing with the red-hot shot used by the defenders' artillery. When a number of these strange craft were completed, preparations were made for a grand attack. A thousand pieces of ordnance were mounted afloat and on shore, and 83,000 barrels of gunpowder collected. The fleet consisted of forty gunboats with heavy artillery, bomb vessels with 12-inch mortars, ten ships of the line, 300 large boats for landing troops, and a vast number of frigates, xebèques, gallies and setees. This force was still further swollen before the attack by the arrival of the Franco-Spanish fleet, which brought the total personnel employed against the fortress to about 100,000.

On the 17th of July de Crillon assumed command of the July 17 army, which had been reinforced by 12,000 French troops. After a great deal of reviewing, parading, gasconading and visits by Royal Princes, the attack was launched on the 8th of September Sept. 8

<sup>1</sup> Beatson's *Naval and Military Memoirs*.

1782 and repulsed with heavy loss. Next morning the attack was renewed and the Spanish fleet joined in the bombardment.

Sept. 13 On the 18th the new floating batteries, on which so many hopes rested, were brought into action under command of Don Moreno and the 'Duc de Crillon, the French Princes, many foreigners of the greatest distinction, the first nobility of Spain and the great military officers of the besieging armies together with an amazing crowd of spectators, assembled to behold the grand scene.'<sup>1</sup> But the grand scene was not the one they expected. Elliott's men surpassed themselves in the accuracy and rapidity of their fire and the showers of red-hot shot, bombs, and carcasses caused the greatest havoc amongst D'Arçon's contrivances. During the night the floating batteries caught fire one after the other and, to add to their discomfiture, they were suddenly attacked by a flotilla of gunboats led by Captain Curtis, R.N., who drove away the boats attempting to rescue the crews from the flames. Before noon next day five of these batteries had blown up, three were nearly burnt to the water's edge, and two were in flames. The great attack was not only beaten off but completely crushed.

Oct. 9 Howe in the meantime was experiencing contrary winds and did not arrive off Cape St. Vincent until the 9th of October. On the 10th he received news from a frigate of the unsuccessful attacks on the fortress and the presence of a great fleet in Gibraltar Bay. But he was undaunted by this superior force, and pressed on.

During the voyage he discussed the strategy to be employed with the senior officers. One day, when lying to, to collect the convoy, he assembled the Admirals and Captains in his cabin and put this question to them:—'There are probably fifty sail of the line preparing to oppose our operation. In view of our superior state of discipline and better knowledge of tactics can we counteract the inequality of force by attacking at night?' Each officer was asked his opinion in turn, commencing with the junior, and all expressed themselves in favour of a night attack until it came to Jervis's turn. He expressed emphatic views against the proposal on account of the confusion that would

<sup>1</sup> Beaton's *Naval and Military Memoirs*.

result, and the impossibility of using the signal code which by now the fleet were well trained in. Rear-Admiral Barrington agreed with Jervis and added, 'Give us daylight, my Lord, by all means, that we may see what we are about.' Howe, like Hood, believed in taking his officers into his confidence. 1782

On the 11th the fleet was formed into line of battle in close order and the storeships stationed ahead. The wind was westerly and so favourable for the fleet to hasten to the assistance of the convoy if it was attacked. Oct. 11

Howe had experienced stormy winds the day before, but at Gibraltar a full gale had been blowing with disastrous results to Cordova's fleet. One ship of the line was driven ashore at Algeciras, two were driven away to the eastwards of the Rock, and the *St. Miguel*, a 72, was forced ashore near the Ragged Staff at Gibraltar and was compelled to strike. There was, however, still a formidable fleet left in efficient condition.

By 6 p.m. on the 11th Howe's supply ships were off the entrance to the Bay but the masters 'for want of timely attention to the circumstances of the navigation pointed out in their instructions' <sup>1</sup> failed to make the harbour. Only four ships got in that night. The remainder were carried to the eastward. Howe had no choice but to follow and endeavour to escort them back to the westward. Oct. 11

Cordova, seeing the British fleet pass through the Straits, became apprehensive for the safety of his two ships of the line that had been driven into the Mediterranean by the storm and put to sea. During the forenoon of the 13th, when the British fleet was about forty-five miles east of Gibraltar, the frigate *Latona* reported 'enemy in sight.' By sunset Howe could see the enemy fleet from his quarterdeck. The wind was westerly and the enemy appeared to consist of forty-two ships of the line and twenty-two smaller vessels. Cordova bore down towards the British fleet, which was formed in close order ready for battle, but at nine o'clock hauled to the wind. Oct. 13

Howe, in the meantime, had obtained freedom to manœuvre by detaching the convoy under escort of a ship of the line to the

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Victory, October 21, Cape Spartel, E.N.E. 40 leagues.'

- 1782 Zaforine Islands on the Barbary coast. During the night two frigates watched the enemy and at two in the morning they informed Howe that the enemy had tacked. By daylight next morning Cordova's fleet was only visible from the masthead, but the two ships he had gone out to succour had joined him.
- Oct. 14 On the 14th Howe felt the wind he was hoping for from the east and at once shaped course for Gibraltar. Next day the weather was thick and the ships obliged to use fog guns, but it cleared by five in the evening and the majority of the convoy were able to secure at the mole before nightfall. The remainder were all safely in by the 18th.
- Oct. 19 On the 19th a frigate on patrol reported sighting the enemy to the north-east of the Rock. As they were 'so nearly between Europa and Ceuta points that there was not space to form in order of battle or either tack' Howe 'repassed the straits followed by the enemy.'<sup>1</sup> When clear to the west he brought-to for the night. The wind being easterly, Cordova was to windward and so in a position to accept or refuse the challenge.
- Oct. 20 On the morning of the 20th the enemy, with their superiority of ten ships of the line, were only fifteen miles to windward, and Howe's men must have felt certain that they would be in the thick of a great battle before many hours had passed. But they were to be disappointed. About sunset La Motte-Picquet's division attacked the van and Cordova's centre division attacked the rear, but they made no attempt to come to close quarters and withdrew after a short cannonade. Some desultory firing took place again at ten o'clock, but it was of no consequence and Howe's flagship never fired a shot.
- Next morning the enemy were nearly out of sight, and, as it was evident that they did not intend fighting, Howe proceeded home and arrived at Spithead on the 14th of November. The operations afford another striking instance of failure due to lack of offensive spirit. Cordova was far superior in numbers, his enemy was hampered by a convoy on the outward voyage, and, after the relief, took up a challenging position to leeward of him. Yet he did absolutely nothing.
- Nov. 14

<sup>1</sup> Howe's Despatch, 'Victory, October 21, Cape Spartel, R.N.E. 40 leagues.'

He had no intention of coming to close grips with his weaker enemy. 'The van of the enemy' wrote Barrington, 'had a choice of their distance and happy should I have been had they thought proper to have closed more with us, such was the conduct of the French Rear-Admiral that he twice fired a single gun and finding that the last went far over the *Goliath*, hauled up and began the action.'<sup>1</sup> 1782

Howe's skill, ability and courage, stand out clearly in these operations which were magnificently executed and he would have been the first to give praise to his Captains for, during the whole voyage of that great fleet and convoy, not one accident or separation occurred. Well may the French writer Chevalier compare this excellent seamanship with the unfortunate incidents in de Grasse's smaller fleet which brought about the battle of The Saints. No better comment could be made on the operation than that of another French writer, 'Quantity disappeared before quality.' Howe was a great seaman and commanded great seamen.

Desultory firing continued against the fortress for some time, but it was now in a good state of defence, thanks to fresh troops, provisions and ammunition.

Early in February news arrived of the signing of peace and on the 6th the gates of Gibraltar were opened for the first time for three years, seven months and five days. Eliott was created Lord Heathfield, and the other names which are immortalised for their part in one of the finest military episodes in history are Sergeant-Major Ince, designer of the rock batteries, Captain Curtis, who commanded the gunboats, General Green, the Chief Engineer, and Boyd, the Lieutenant-Governor.

1783  
Feb. 6

<sup>1</sup> Barrington to Howe, 'Britannia at sea, October 21, 1782.'



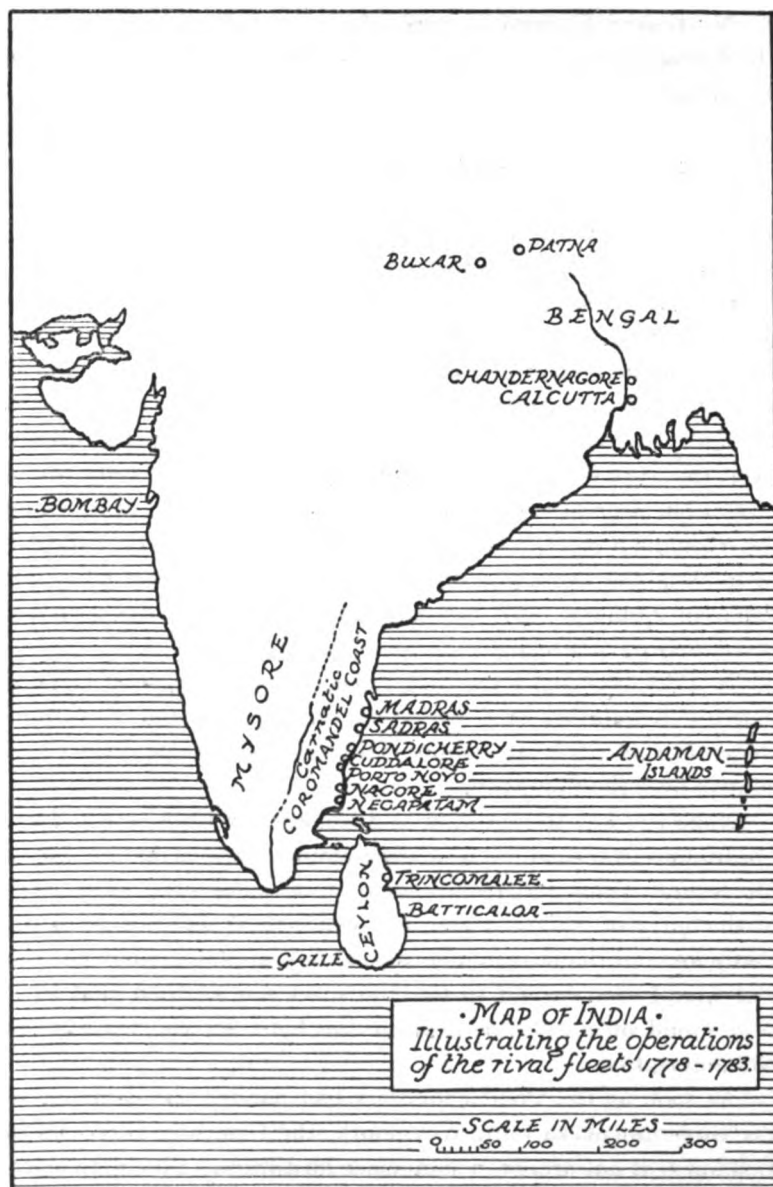
## CHAPTER XXII

### INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA TO THE END OF 1781

1781 THE operations so far described in Home Waters, North America and the West Indies have all acted and reacted one on another, and so form one connected story. Outward-bound fleets, convoys, provision ships and storeships of all the belligerents were in a danger zone until well clear to the westward. Ships destined for the East Indies also passed through the zone, but the squadrons were as a rule small and could be prepared and started off on their voyage without making a stir in the enemy's councils. When safely through the zone they were out of sight and out of mind for a very long time. Consequently the operations in the Indian Ocean form a chapter of history of their own, though the supply and maintenance of the forces there was a continual drain on home resources.

In order to understand the effect of the French entry into the war on Indian affairs, it is necessary to touch briefly on the  
1760 history of British activities since 1760. Clive, who, in conjunction with Admiral Sir G. Pocock, had captured the principal French settlement in Bengal, partially ruined French power in the Deccan and reduced the Dutch to submission, returned home in February of that year. After his departure the Mogul Emperor invaded  
1763 Bengal, but was defeated. But by the summer of 1763 it was evident that war was imminent between the two races, as Mir Kasin, the Nawab of Bengal, was openly hostile to the Bengal Council.

In June an Indian official named William Ellis took possession of Patna, but he was surrounded and captured. On the other hand, Mir Kasin was subsequently defeated by Major Adams in two fierce battles.



MAP XV.

1764 Next year General Munro defeated a large native army at the Battle of Buxar and this important victory opened up Northern India to the British.

1765 In May 1765 Clive returned for a second time as Governor of Bengal and at once set about improving the internal administration. He had a hard task, as demoralisation, insubordination and corruption were rife both amongst the Company's servants and in the military establishments. During his tenure of office he wrote: 'It is scarcely hyperbole to say that to-morrow the whole Moghul Empire is in our power.' But he did not attempt to extend the sphere of British influence beyond Bengal, Behar and Orissa. The British force in India was not in sufficient strength to conquer and garrison the whole peninsula. Moreover, the work of administering such an enormous territory would have been a greater burden than the Company's servants could have shouldered. As it was, his successor had great difficulty in holding the three provinces against the Marathas. Clive left India in January 1767 and in 1772 Warren Hastings assumed office as Governor of Bengal.

1774 In 1774 Hastings's position was considerably altered by Lord North's Regulating Act by which he was created Governor-General of all the settlements. The Act also extended the State control over the Company.

1778 None the less the position in 1778 was far from satisfactory. Continuous war had been waged against various native forces for several years and resources were at a low ebb. The news of the entry of France was consequently most unwelcome to the Company and the British officials, as they, apprehending that the war would soon extend to the Indian Ocean, realised that their fate would once more depend on the fight for the sea lines of communication.

As soon as the French minister had handed the demands of his Government to Lord Weymouth, the Company Directors in London sent out orders to commence hostilities. Chandernagore, the French settlement in Bengal, was at once seized and preparations made to attack Pondicherry, the command of the troops being given to Munro. The army arrived outside the town on the 8th Aug. 8

of August and on the same day Commodore Sir Edward Vernon arrived off the port to establish a blockade. The East Indies squadron consisted of one '60,' one '54' and three frigates. Vernon had hardly reached his position when strange sails were sighted in the offing. He at once chased and 'having so little wind and no certainty of its continuance' he 'thought it necessary to bring them to action which at a  $\frac{1}{2}$  past two became general.'<sup>1</sup> The French squadron, consisting of one '64,' two frigates and two armed vessels, was under the command of Captain Tronjoly. The British ships received a great deal of damage to their masts and sails, and after the action were unable to follow the French squadron when it shaped course for Pondicherry. 1778

Vernon again appeared off the port on the 21st and Tronjoly got under way. But the breeze failed after the French fleet had cleared the harbour and the two fleets lay becalmed in sight of one another. Next day Vernon sailed into Pondicherry Roads expecting the French fleet to do the same but, to his surprise, it disappeared to the south. Tronjoly, like his predecessor d'Aché, had abandoned the contest and sailed for Mauritius. The fall of the city was then only a question of time, and on the 15th of October M. de Bellecomb, the Governor, capitulated. Aug. 21

In March 1779, Sir Edward Hughes sailed for the East Indies with six small ships of the line.<sup>2</sup> He arrived at Madras on the 19th of January, 1780, and took over the command from Vernon whose 'state of health frequently rendered him incapable of duty, the faculty being of opinion there was no probability of re-establishment.'<sup>3</sup> The French also reinforced their squadron but did not attempt any operations during the years 1779 and 1780. Oct. 15  
1779  
Mar.  
1780  
1781  
Mar.

During these years British difficulties in India increased. Fierce war was waged against various native rulers, but the French squadron under Comte d'Orves made no attempt to co-operate with them, despite their entreaties. But the sailing of Commodore Johnstone's squadron in March 1781 was the signal for the commencement of more serious sea fighting, for the French replied

<sup>1</sup> Vernon's Despatch, 'Rippon off Sadras, August 16, 1778.'

<sup>2</sup> For details see Appendix VII.

<sup>3</sup> Hughes's Despatch, 'Supurb, Madras Road, February 6, 1780.'

- 1781 by appointing the redoubtable Suffren to command a squadron to act in opposition.

The destination of Johnstone's force was kept secret. It was given out that the squadron was sailing to operate in South America as reports had been received of insurrections in the Spanish colonies, but its real object was the capture of the Cape of Good Hope, then a Dutch possession. Unfortunately, a French spy discovered the destination of the force and the French Government were able to plan counter-measures.

- Mar. 13 Johnstone's force, consisting of one '74,' one '64,' three '50's,' three frigates and a number of storeships, transports and East Indiamen, sailed with Darby's Grand Fleet when it left Spithead on the 18th of March for the relief of Gibraltar. The troops were under command of General Medows, who had distinguished himself at St. Lucia. Nine days later five of the line under command of Suffren sailed from Brest with de Grasse's West Indies fleet. Suffren's final destination was the East Indies station, but Johnstone's squadron was his first objective. Eight troop transports with reinforcements for India accompanied the French squadron.

- April 11 Johnstone arrived at Porto Praya in St. Jago, one of the Cape Verde Islands, on the 11th of April to take in wood, water and live stock. The Bay was quite suitable for anchoring ships in a good defensive position, but Johnstone anchored his ships in a most injudicious manner, with his own flagship unable to fire her guns to seaward owing to other ships lying in the line of fire. Moreover no ship was detailed to cruise in the offing to give notice of the approach of an enemy.

- April 16 At 9.30 A.M. on the 16th, when a great number of men were ashore collecting supplies, fishing, and taking recreation, the *Isis*, lying nearest to seaward, made the signal for eleven sail to the north-east. Johnstone at once made the general recall, and signalled to his ships to unmoor and prepare for battle. He himself went on board the *Isis* and was soon able to make out the strangers as five sail of the line and some smaller craft. It was Suffren, and the British fleet was quite unprepared to withstand a determined attack.

Suffren led straight into the harbour, and, followed by his other '74,' the *Annibal*, anchored close to the *Monmouth* and *Hero*, and opened fire. His third ship, the *Artésien*, intended to attack the British flagship but could not manœuvre into position. Instead, she fouled an East Indiaman and both ships drifted out to sea. The fourth and fifth ships, *Sphinx* and *Vengeur*, sailed in to leeward of the British ships and made no attempt to come to close quarters. (Diagram No. 24.) Johnstone and Medows, seeing that the *Romney* could take little part in the action, went on board the *Hero*. 1781

The East Indiamen and storeships joined in the fray with musketry fire, and Suffren, finding he was unsupported and in a warm corner, decided to slip his cable and proceed out of harbour. The *Annibal's* captain was taken by surprise at the suddenness with which the attack developed, and, as the ship was not properly cleared for action, was unable to give his Admiral full support. His ship was badly knocked about by the British fire and he had great difficulty in joining Suffren at the harbour entrance.

As soon as the *Annibal* was clear of the anchorage, Johnstone repaired to the *Romney* and called his captains on board to report on the state of their ships. With the exception of the *Isis*, reports were satisfactory, and he ordered the ships to slip their cables and proceed to sea as soon as possible in pursuit of Suffren. It was a wonderful chance, as it was quite obvious that the condition of the *Annibal* would prevent Suffren sailing away unless he was prepared to sacrifice the ship, which was extremely unlikely. But Johnstone forgot to arrange a rendezvous for the transports, an omission that had a considerable effect later on.

Unfortunately the British squadron took a long time to clear the harbour, and the *Isis* did not obey the signal, as her captain considered her masts and rigging were not in a serviceable condition. Johnstone insisted on the *Isis* coming out, but shortly afterwards her fore topmast went over the side and further delay occurred while the wreckage was cleared. Suffren, in the meantime, had collected his squadron and taken the *Annibal* in tow.

Johnstone, finding he was unable to overhaul his enemy before sunset, abandoned the chase and returned to Porto Praya.



DIAGRAM 24.—BATTLE OF PORTO PRAYA, APRIL 16TH, 1781.

'I must have left my convoy in distress,' he wrote, 'and separate from the troops without any fixed determination concerning them or their destination; I must also have relinquished the object of the present expedition; for these and other reasons I determined to return to Porto Praya.' 1781

The total casualties in the action were: British, 86 killed and 180 wounded; French, 105 killed and 204 wounded. The majority of the British casualties occurred in the transports from stray shots. Nearly all the French casualties occurred in the flagship and the *Annibal*.

The captain of the *Isis* was court martialled for disobeying the Commodore's verbal orders and signals, but was honourably acquitted. Johnstone, who appears to have very little sea experience, proved himself unequal to the occasion. To anchor his squadron as he did, to allow a large number of men ashore at one time, to omit to station a look-out ship in the offing, were not the acts of a good seaman. He showed courage and determination when he hurried out after Suffren, but, in doing so, forgot all about his valuable convoy. On the other hand, Suffren gave a foretaste of what he was soon to prove himself in the East Indies—a brave and skilful Admiral. It is not quite clear why the captain of the *Annibal* was unprepared for action, but it is clear that Suffren's captains failed him. If they had not, the day would have gone badly for the British squadron, and when the accounts of the battle reached Paris Castries ordered Suffren to send home the captains of the *Sphinx* and *Vengeur*.

Suffren kept his main object in view and made his way as fast as he could to the Cape, where he arrived on the 21st of July. July 21  
He found the place in a poor state of defence with only 400 men and very little artillery. He landed cannon, stores, and two battalions under M. Conway, and then set sail for Mauritius.

Johnstone did not sail from Porto Praya till the 1st of May. May 1  
On the 9th of July he learnt from a frigate that Suffren had reinforced the Cape garrison and that a number of Dutch East Indiamen were lying in Saldanha Bay. His force was inadequate to deal with the reinforced garrison and he turned his attention to the East Indiamen. On seeing the British fleet heading for



1781 the Bay, the Dutch crews cut their cables, loosed their topsails to run the ships ashore, and set them on fire. One was burnt out, but the other four, which were ships of large tonnage, were floated and prepared for sea. Johnstone, in accordance with his orders, then detached three of the line and the convoy with orders to proceed to India and himself set sail for England.

Oct. Suffren arrived at Mauritius at the end of October and joined forces with Comte d'Orves. With this reinforcement the French fleet numbered eleven of the line and several large frigates.

We must return for a moment to the military operations in India. During the early part of the year Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore, had overrun the Carnatic, but had been defeated at Porto Novo by Sir Eyre Coote on the 1st of July. Shortly after the battle, advices were received from England of the rupture with the Dutch, and the British Commanders decided to capture Negapatam. Munro's army and Hughes's fleet co-operated in the attack, but the reduction of the fort proved no easy task as Hyder Ali had reinforced the garrison. Siege operations began in the middle of October, but it was not until the 11th of November that M. Van Vlissegan, the Governor, submitted and signed the terms of capitulation.

Despite these successes, the treasury of the Company was nearly empty, the military forces were greatly diminished, an expensive and bloody war was being fought against Hyder Ali and the Mahratas, and most of the other native states were openly or secretly hostile to the British. It was a great opportunity for France. D'Orves sailed from Mauritius on the 7th of December to co-operate with Hyder Ali in an endeavour to drive the British out of India. The fate of India was once more in the balance, and the issue was to be decided by five hard-fought sea-battles.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE INDIAN OCEAN, 1782 AND 1783

#### THE FIVE BATTLES <sup>1</sup>

**AFTER** the surrender of Negapatam, Sir Edward Hughes determined on the capture of the Dutch settlement at Trincomalee, 'a port on the Island of Ceylon of the utmost consequence to us as the only good harbour on this side the peninsula of India.'<sup>2</sup> He anchored his seven ships in the Bay early in January 1782. The troops were landed on the 11th, and, assisted by a large number of ratings from the fleet, succeeded in taking Fort Ostenburgh by storm. The capitulation was then signed. 1782  
Jan. 11

Leaving the troops as garrison, Hughes sailed for Madras on the 31st to provision and store. On his arrival there on the 8th of February he received definite information from Lord Macartney, the Governor, that a French fleet of thirty sail were at anchor sixty miles to the northward. It was Suffren, who had taken command of the French fleet on the death of Comte d'Orves, and was on his way to co-operate with Hyder Ali in an endeavour to turn the British out of Madras. Suffren had captured on passage the *Hannibal*, fifty guns, which Johnstone had detached at the Cape to reinforce the British squadron. Next day Hughes received a welcome reinforcement of two ships, which brought his command up to nine ships of the line, including one of fifty guns. Jan. 31  
Feb. 8

On the 15th Suffren appeared off the roadstead with twelve sail of the line, six frigates, eight transports, and six captured ships, and anchored about four miles from the shore. He was surprised at the strength of the British fleet, having no knowledge Feb. 9  
Feb. 15

<sup>1</sup> For details of ships see Appendix xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* at sea, April 4, 1782.'

1782 of the reinforcements that had recently arrived. He had already made up his mind as to his object ; ' the British capture of Trincomalee and that of Negapatam and perhaps of all Ceylon should make us wish for a general action.' <sup>1</sup>

Faced with a superior fleet, Hughes ' placed His Majesty's ships in the most advantageous manner to defend themselves and the other ships in the road with springs on their cables that they might bring their broadsides to bear more effectually on the enemy should they attempt an attack.' <sup>2</sup> At four in the afternoon Suffren weighed and stood away to the south. Hughes immediately started in pursuit, having taken on board 300 officers and men of the 98th regiment.

Feb. 16 At daybreak next morning Hughes sighted the French ships of the line bearing east about twelve miles, and the transports which had separated from the fleet during the night bearing S.W. about nine miles. He at once ordered a general chase to the south-west in order to ' take their transports, well knowing that the enemy's line-of-battle ships would follow to protect them all in their power.' <sup>2</sup> He succeeded in taking six, five of which were English. Suffren put before the wind, but there was only a light breeze, and, though he got within three miles of the sternmost ships by three o'clock, could not overhaul the British fleet before dark. One of the prizes was laden with a large quantity of artillery, gunpowder and military stores, which were gifts from the King of France to Hyder Ali.

Feb. 17 During the night Hughes continued on his south-easterly course, and at daybreak the French fleet bore north by east six miles. The wind was light with occasional squalls, and at six o'clock Hughes formed his line of battle on an easterly course, hoping that the usual sea breeze would shortly give him the windward position.

Suffren soon began to close ' as he had the advantage of the squalls from the N.N.E. which always reached them first and in consequence continued longest with them,' <sup>2</sup> and Hughes, wishing to get his ships into a better formation, ran down before

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet, in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, ' *Superb at sea*, April 4, 1782.'

the wind in line abreast to give those out of station a chance of closing. 1782

At 3.40 P.M., 'finding it impossible to avoid the enemy's attack under all the disadvantages of little or no wind to work our ships and of being to leeward of them,' Hughes formed his line of battle on the port tack. But the *Exeter* was some distance out of station astern.

It was soon evident that Suffren did not intend to make the time-honoured ship-for-ship attack. He was manœuvring in order to bring a concentration on the British rear, and, as soon as his ships were in station, he came down to the attack. With his own division he turned up on a parallel course to the British fleet so that his van ship was abreast of the *Superb*, the fifth ship in the line, whilst his other division sailed round and attacked on the lee side. Only two of this second division actually reached the lee position, but, even so, a concentration of eight ships on five was obtained and the British ships suffered severely. (Diagram No. 25.)

For two hours the unequal battle raged, and then a squall of wind from the south-east forced both fleets to tack and enabled the British van to take part in the fighting. Firing only ceased when darkness came on. Both Admirals then shaped course for anchorages where they could refit, Suffren for Pondicherry, Hughes for Trincomalee. The *Superb*, Hughes's flagship, had suffered much damage, and the *Exeter*, Commodore King, was little more than a floating wreck, having withstood the concentrated fire of as many as five ships at one time.

This, the first of five hard-fought contests, is known as the Battle of Sadras.

No doubt Suffren's reputation as a skilled seaman and hard-fighter had preceded him, but this was his first appearance in independent command, and, from the day of the battle, Hughes knew that he had to defend the sea lines of communication against an opponent of determination and originality.

Hughes arrived at Trincomalee on the 24th of February and Feb. 24  
sailed again on the 4th of March for Madras Roads, where he Mar. 4  
arrived on the 12th. There he received intelligence that Suffren Mar. 12

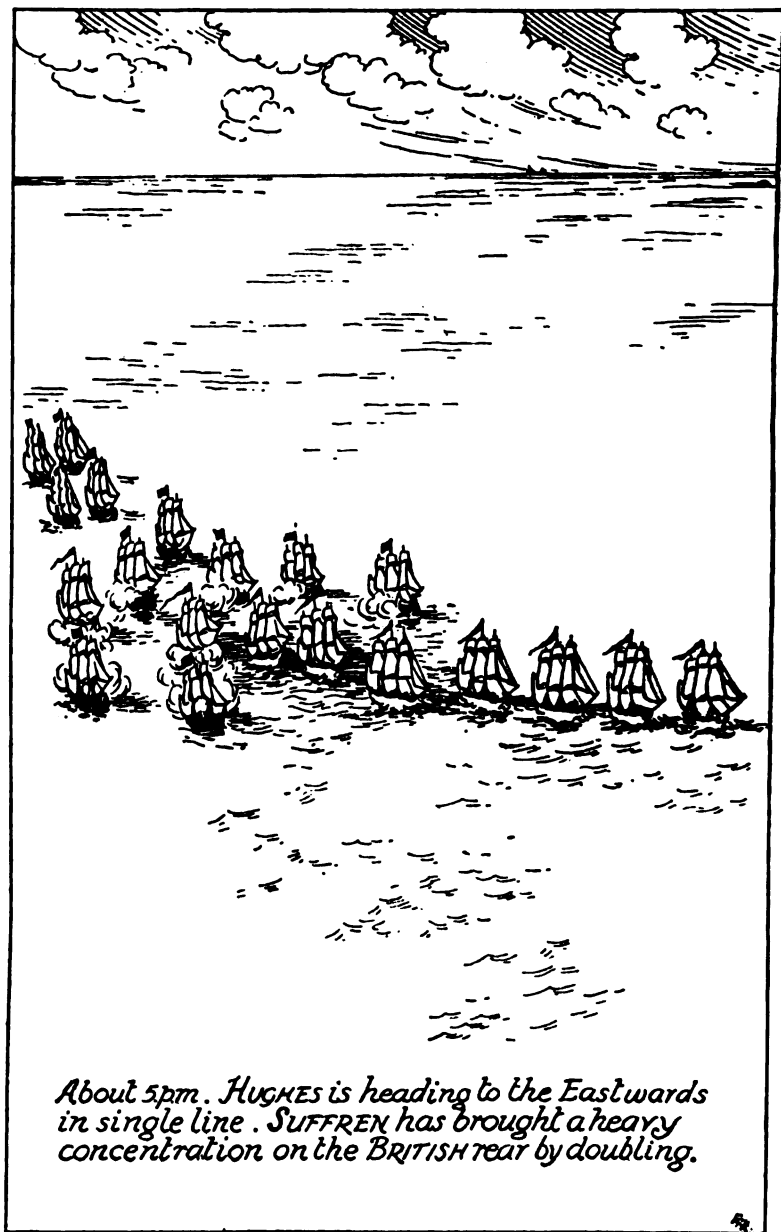


DIAGRAM 25.—BATTLE OF SADRAS, FEBRUARY 17TH, 1782.

was at Porto Novo, a settlement about 100 miles to the south-wards of Madras. Later on he heard that Suffren had sailed to the southwards, and being 'apprehensive they might attack Trincomalee in its present weak state'<sup>1</sup> he took on board some troops and stores and sailed for Trincomalee on the 29th. On the 30th he was joined by two ships of the line from England, but their crews were in a weak state from sickness and scurvy. In the meantime Suffren had landed troops to take part in the siege of Cuddalore, and afterwards had shaped course to the south in the hopes of intercepting the British reinforcement.

On the 8th of April the two fleets were in sight of one another, but Hughes held his course as he was anxious before everything else to strengthen Trincomalee. The fleets remained in sight of one another on the 9th and 10th.

On the 11th Hughes made the coast of Ceylon about forty-five miles to the windward of Trincomalee, but he was not destined to reach port without fighting. Next morning the enemy were seen to be closing under a press of canvas. 'Their copper-bottomed ships coming fast up with the ships in our rear,' Hughes 'determined to engage,'<sup>2</sup> and formed his line on the starboard tack, ships two cables apart. Suffren did likewise and the fleets remained in the same relative positions until 12.15 P.M., when the French Admiral decided to attack by altering course together towards the British line. The French flagship steered straight for the British flagship, and was supported in the attack by three other ships, but the French van and rear did not turn up at such close range and the result was a terrific battle between the centre ships in each line. (Diagram No. 26.) Suffren had intended his odd ship to attack to leeward, but she failed to get there. The *Superb* and *Monmouth* bore the brunt of the attack, and the severity of the fighting is shown by the casualty lists for this stage of the action. The *Superb* had 59 killed and 96 wounded, the *Monmouth* 45 killed and 102 wounded, whilst the French lost 74 killed and 216 wounded. The *Monmouth* lost her main and mizzen masts, and the French attempted to

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* at sea, April 4, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* in Trincomalee Bay, May 10, 1782.'

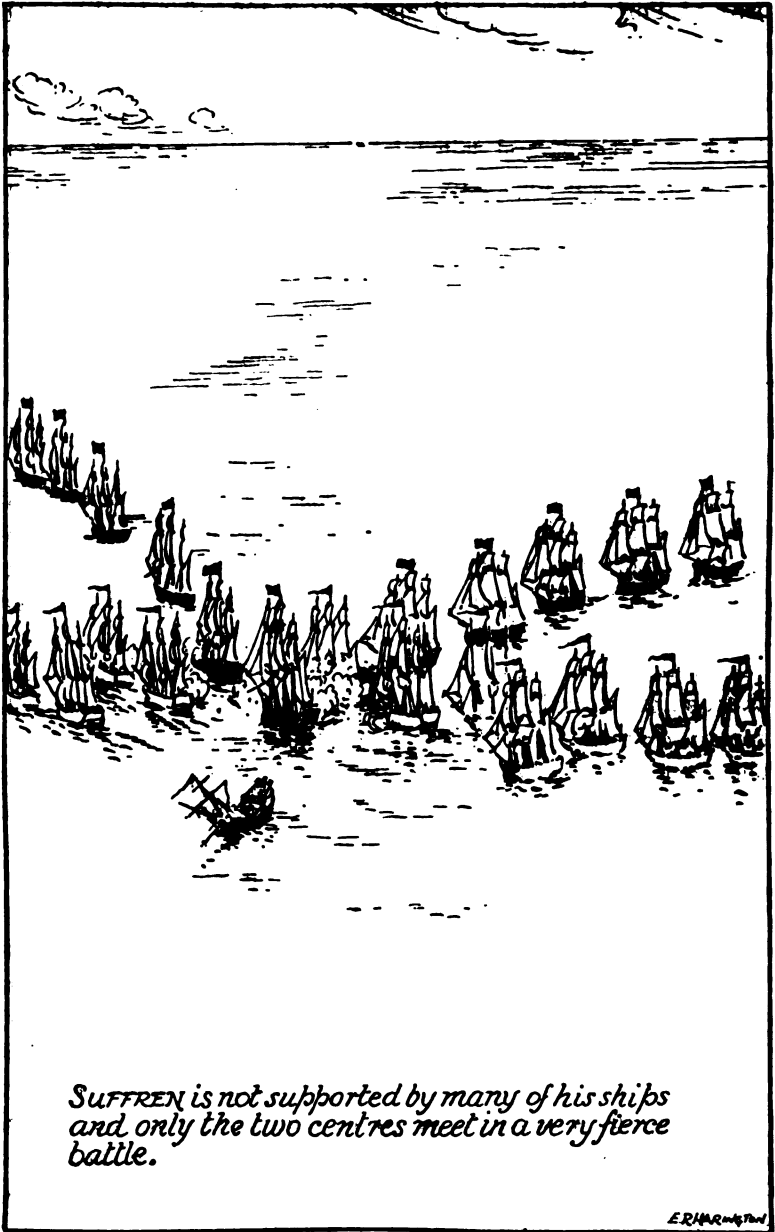


DIAGRAM 26.—BATTLE OF PROVIDIEN, APRIL 12TH, 1782.

make her prize, but she was saved by the skill of Captain Hawker of the *Hero* who took her in tow. 1782

At 8.40 p.m. Hughes 'being careful not to entangle our ships with the shore'<sup>1</sup> wore his fleet round. Firing continued during this evolution, and at 5.40, finding he was in fifteen fathoms of water, he made the signal to prepare to anchor.

At 6.40 firing ceased, and Suffren, who had shifted his flag on account of the damage to his flagship, hauled off.

The British fleet anchored shortly afterwards, and next morning the French fleet were seen to be also at anchor five miles away 'in much disorder and apparent distress, but they had lost no lower masts.'<sup>1</sup> This second contest is called the 'Battle of Providien' by French historians as the fleets were off a rock of that name when fighting began.

Suffren was very angry with those of his captains who had hesitated to take their ships into 'pistol range.' He wrote home that unless half of them were changed little could be expected from the fleet.

For the next six days both fleets remained at anchor repairing their damage, which was considerable.

On the 19th Suffren got under weigh and stood down for the British fleet, but, to Hughes's surprise, he suddenly tacked and shaped course to the eastward. On the 22nd the *Monmouth* was repaired sufficiently for Hughes to weigh and proceed into Trincomalee, where he anchored the same evening. He had great difficulty in repairing his ships, and the number of sick caused him great anxiety. 'And indeed,' he wrote, 'when Their Lordships are pleased to peruse paper No. 3 of this packet containing an exact and clear state of the complement of each of His Majesty's ships composing the squadron under my command they will see that it is impossible for me to proceed on any service with a prospect of action until the sick or the greater part of them are recovered.'<sup>1</sup> He added that it was his intention to proceed to the south for the protection of convoys as soon as the fleet was ready for sea.

Suffren anchored at Batacalo, about sixty miles south of

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* in Trincomalee Bay, May 10, 1782.'



1782 Trincomalee, where he refitted his ships and was in a good strategical position to attack or protect convoys. Whilst there he received orders from home to retire to Mauritius to refit and await reinforcements. He knew his officers were anxious to go there, but he disregarded the orders and determined to remain on the coast. Of Mauritius he wrote: 'Ce pays-ci amollit ; il y a une quantité de jolies femmes et une façon de vivre fort agréable.'<sup>1</sup>

June In June Suffren returned to the Coromandel coast and conferred with Hyder Ali at Cuddalore. He had received intelligence of the sailing of a reinforcement under Sir Richard Bickerton, and was determined to fight Hughes if possible whilst the superiority of numbers rested with him. He also took on board 700 French infantry and 800 natives, as he intended to lay siege to Negapatam if opportunity offered.

June 25 Hughes sailed from Trincomalee on the 24th of June to watch Suffren, and on the 25th anchored at Negapatam. There he learnt that the French fleet was at anchor off Cuddalore, and that two British ships loaded with stores and ammunition had fallen into Suffren's hands.

July 5 At 1 p.m. on the 5th of July the French fleet of twelve sail of the line came in sight off the harbour entrance, and at 3 p.m. Hughes proceeded to sea and stood to the southwards to gain the windward position. At daylight next morning the enemy were seen to be at anchor about seven miles away, bearing N.N.E., the wind being south-west, and Hughes at once put before the wind and sailed down towards them in line abreast. Suffren also weighed and stood to the westward.

July 6 When at his pre-arranged distance, Hughes formed into line ahead on a parallel course to Suffren, and shortly afterwards made the signal to bear down on the enemy's line ship for ship. Suffren replied by tacking his squadron, and Hughes then hauled to the wind again. Manœuvring for position followed, and at 9.45 Hughes again bore down to attack ship for ship. A French ship fired the first gun at 10.40 and each ship discharged its first broadside as it reached close range.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

From 11.10 to 12.35 firing was general all along the line and 'mostly very close.'<sup>1</sup> During this period one French ship lost her mainmast and was forced to quit her position in the line. At the height of the action a fresh south-easterly wind sprang up suddenly, and the ships of both fleets were forced off their course, some to starboard and some to port. Four British and two French ships, which had swung inwards, met and fought a fierce battle in which the rearmost French ship, the *Brilliant*, received a terrible hammering, losing 47 killed and 186 wounded. She was saved from destruction by the timely arrival of Suffren with his flagship. (Diagram No. 27.)

A violent duel also took place between the *Sévère* and the *Sultan*. The captain of the *Sévère* gave orders to haul down the flag and called out that he surrendered, but the First Lieutenant ordered him into his cabin and continued the fight.

Meanwhile Suffren had collected the remainder of his fleet, and was standing back on the port tack to assist the ships in the mêlée. Hughes also wore his fleet to go to the support of the ships engaged, 'but the Captain of the *Monarca* having hailed and informed me that all his standing rigging was shot away and the ship otherwise so disabled as to be ungovernable, and the *Hero*, on the contrary, tack-hauling in with the land with the signal of distress out,'<sup>1</sup> he again wore round and stood away to the westward to collect his ships.

At 1.30 he formed line on the port tack, and at 5.30 anchored between Negapatam and Nagore. Suffren, who also had been a long time collecting his ships, anchored about half-an-hour later nine miles to leeward. At nine o'clock next morning Suffren weighed and shaped course for Cuddalore to refit. Hughes 'gave up all thought of pursuing'<sup>1</sup> as 'the damages sustained by the several ships of the squadron appeared so great.'<sup>1</sup>

The losses in the Battle of Negapatam were: British, 77 killed, 293 wounded; French, 178 killed, 601 wounded. Amongst the killed was Hughes's flag captain, Maclellan. Suffren's flagship suffered heavier loss in this action than any other ship during the war, except the *Ville de Paris* at the Battle of The Saints.

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, 'Superb off Negapatam, July 15, 1782.'



DIAGRAM 27.—BATTLE OF NEGAPATAM, JULY 6TH, 1782.

Hughes was unable to move for some time. 'As both ammunition and provisions of the squadron are now nearly expended,' he wrote, 'and every ship in the utmost want of a supply stores, it is my intention to proceed with the squadron to Madras Roads so soon as I can secure their masts and yards and put them in a condition to carry sail.'<sup>1</sup> The necessary work was completed by the 18th of July, and the fleet anchored off Madras two days later. But even here he found the task of refitting no easy one: 'Our distress for anchors, cables, cordage and spars of all sizes is still very great. No naval stores having been imported since the arrival of the storeship in July 1780.'<sup>2</sup>

On the 30th he heard that the refit of the French ships was nearly completed, and, anxious for Trincomalee, he despatched two ships with troops and ammunition. But the fleet remained at Madras until the 20th of August.

Suffren put to sea on the 1st of that month to cover a convoy, escorted by two of the line, which had arrived from France at Point de Galles, Ceylon. He anchored at Batacalo on the 9th. The convoy and escort joined him on the 21st, and shortly afterwards he sailed for Trincomalee, which he was determined to capture and use as his base. The troops were landed on the 26th. Four days later the batteries opened, and the Commandant, Captain Macdowel of the 42nd, was compelled to surrender.

On the 16th Hughes received news from a frigate that the French fleet had been at Batacalo on the 12th, and he sailed on the 20th, with his twelve of the line, to seek out Suffren and also cover the arrival of Bickerton's squadron. All along he was 'apprehensive the enemy would endeavour to make themselves masters of that harbour.'<sup>3</sup> But he was too late. Suffren had re-embarked the troops not required for the garrison on the 1st of September. Hughes arrived off Trincomalee on the 2nd to find French colours flying on the forts and the enemy fleet anchored in the bay.

On the morning of the 3rd the French fleet of fourteen of the line stood out of the bay, and Hughes formed his twelve ships

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* off Negapatam, July 15, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* in Madras Road, September 30, 1782.'

1782 into line ahead on the starboard tack. The wind was south west, and Suffren had the advantage of the windward position. The two expert commanders manœuvred against one another for some time, Suffren endeavouring to hasten on action by running down on a line of bearing, Hughes shortening and making sail so as to draw his opponent as far as possible from his base.

By 2.30 p.m., when about twenty-five miles from Trincomalee, the French fleet were near enough to attack, and Suffren made the signal for close action. By 2.35 the engagement was general all along the line, the 'two additional ships of the enemy's line falling furiously on our rearmost ship.'<sup>1</sup> Hughes's line was well formed, but the French captains manœuvred their ships badly under fire. They endeavoured to lay alongside their opposite numbers, but three French ships, including Suffren's flagship, bore the brunt of the fighting, whilst a number of the van ships fore-reached beyond the British van. These van ships subsequently attacked the *Exeter* and 'by an exerted fire forced her, much disabled, out of the line,'<sup>1</sup> but they did not take a full share in the fighting. (Diagram No. 28.) A heavy concentration of fire was brought to bear on the three French ships in the centre, and the British ships ahead and astern of them worked their sails in the light breeze so as continually to pour in their broadsides. At 3.28 the French flagship's mizzenmast was shot away, and the ship second ahead of the flagship lost her main and mizzenmasts about the same time.

At 5.35 the wind suddenly backed to the eastwards, and the British fleet wore round and headed to the westward still in a good line. The enemy's van, which had hitherto been endeavouring to get into action by towing with their boats, were now able to join the fray, and the fight continued 'close and vigourously.'<sup>1</sup>

At 6.20 the French Admiral's mainmast went by the board, and at seven o'clock the French fleet hauled off to the southward, the last shot being fired at 7.20.

The casualties in the Battle of Trincomalee were again heavy. French, 82 killed and 255 wounded; British, 51 killed and 283 wounded. In the British list of killed were the names of

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* in Madras Road, September 30, 1782.'

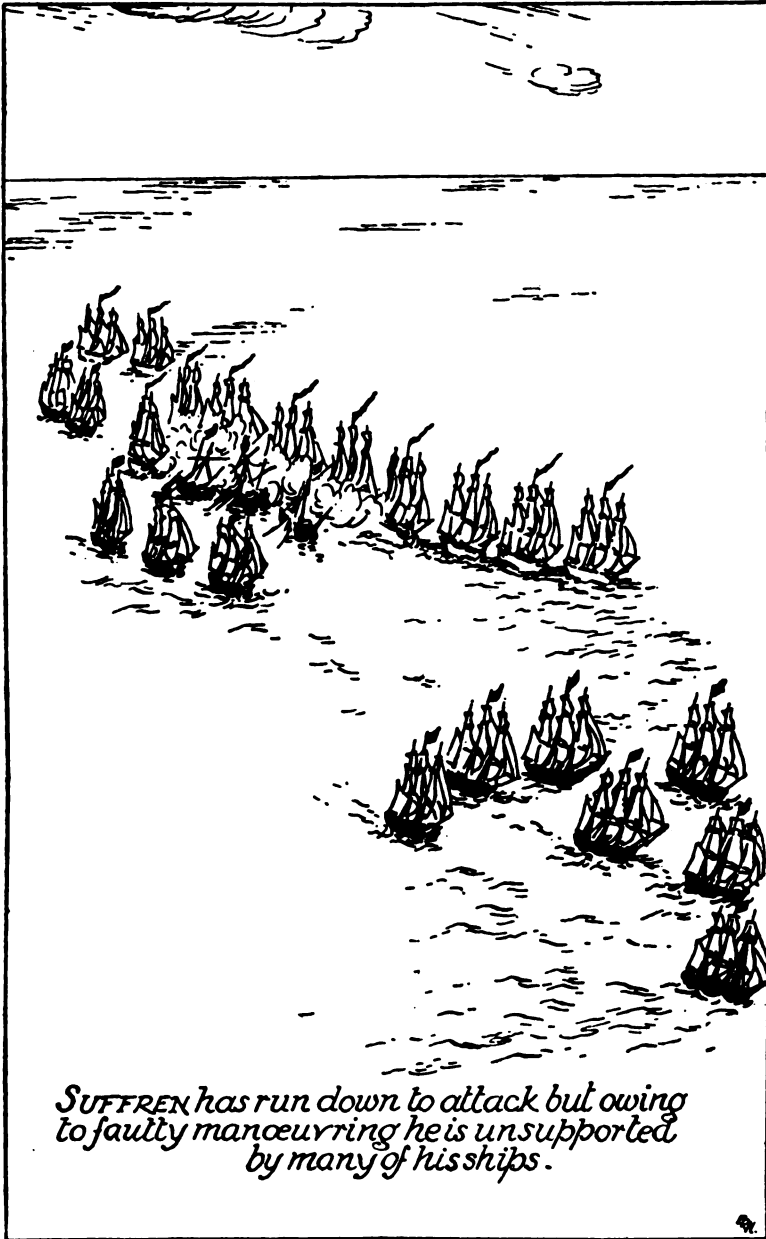


DIAGRAM 28.—BATTLE OF TRINCOMALEE, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1782.

1782 three commanding officers—Watt of the *Sultan*, Wood of the *Worcester*, and Lumley of the *Isis*.

There is no doubt that Suffren was ill-supported by his captains. His intention was to attack ship for ship, whilst his two extra ships doubled round the rear of the British line in order to bring a concentration of fire on the rear ; in fact the same tactics as he employed at the Battle of Sadras. But these two ships, finding that the two rear British ships were not attacked from to windward owing to so many of their consorts over-reaching the van, gave up the idea of doubling and attacked from to windward. Suffren's Chief of Staff wrote of the first phase of the action :—' The enemy formed a semi-circle around us and raked us ahead and astern as the ship came up and fell off with the helm to leeward.' The captains of the van ships were responsible for this state of affairs. The flagship was left unsupported as a result of their bad seamanship. No wonder Suffren wrote after this mortifying experience :—' If I do not change several Captains it is because I have not the men to replace them. It is dreadful to have had four opportunities to destroy the English fleet and they are still in existence.' <sup>1</sup>

After the battle Suffren shaped course for Trincomalee. He had the misfortune to lose one of his ships of the line, the *L'Orient* of seventy-four guns, when making the entrance. She grounded and became a total wreck.

Hughes had lost his base. ' Trincomalee being in the enemy's possession, and the other ports of the west coast of Ceylon unsafe to anchor in at this late season of the year when the north-east winds often blew strong there,' <sup>2</sup> he was ' under necessity to go to Madras to get anchoring ground in order to stop the shot holes under water.' <sup>2</sup> He anchored there on the 9th of September, hoping to get news of Bickerton's reinforcement, but nothing had been heard of him. He was apprehensive that Bickerton would remain at Bombay, ' a circumstance which should it take place may be attended with the very worst consequences to the national interests in this part of the world.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, ' *Superb* in Madras Road, September 30, 1782.'

Many of his ships 'could not be kept above water another year without being effectually repaired in dock.'<sup>1</sup> And to add to his anxieties he heard that the enemy 'were hourly expecting a reinforcement of five line-of-battle ships.'<sup>1</sup> With Trincomalee in the enemy's hands 'it will be next to impracticable for His Majesty's squadron, already in a very disabled state, to fight its way round Ceylon '<sup>1</sup> without Bickerton's reinforcement.

Hughes was severely criticised at the time, and has been criticised since by naval writers, for lack of energy after the Battle of Negapatam, and, as a result, allowing Suffren to deprive him of his base. He was too far away to receive the attentions of Home Authorities, but, instead, he was continually worried by the authorities in India.

In February the Select Committee of Madras had 'arrogated to themselves power over the officer commanding His Majesty's squadron in the East Indies,'<sup>2</sup> and requested him to put to sea to save Trincomalee and pursue Suffren.

Hughes had all along implored them to strengthen the garrison at Trincomalee, but without success. 'They foresaw the danger of the loss of Trincomalee from the want of a sufficient garrison which they had from the beginning neglected and even refused to grant to my earnest and repeated solicitations, and as the blame of the loss of that important place must fall somewhere, they artfully endeavour to lay it at my door as if the squadron was in a condition to proceed on service and I was backward or unwilling to sail to the relief of the place.'<sup>2</sup>

The Committee's method of venting their feelings was not creditable. 'The compliments which the Committee are pleased to pay Mr. Suffren are far from unacceptable to me. I believe him all they say, able, active and sagacious, and more, brave. And yet such are the Principles of the Committee, they compliment Mr. Suffren designed at my expense.'<sup>2</sup> In their anxiety the Committee evidently attempted to act beyond their powers. 'If the Select Committee of Madras or any other of the Indian Company's servants in this country are authorised to dictate

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* in Madras Road, September 30, 1782.'

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Sultan* off Ceylon, October 20, 1782.'



1782 the operations of His Majesty's squadron and to treat the officer commanding it in the insolent, malicious threatening manner in which the Committee have treated me, I am at this hour ignorant of such authority being vested in them.' <sup>1</sup>

Trincomalee was lost because the garrison was insufficient. The scale of possible attack could be accurately forecasted. The strength of Suffren's fleet was known. If the authorities in India had paid heed to Hughes's entreaties, the defence could have been strengthened with guns and men. With a very small reinforcement the position could have been made impregnable.

Hughes has been criticised for remaining at anchor a fortnight after the Battle of Negapatam, and afterwards a month at Madras, though, on his own showing, he was all along anxious for the safety of Trincomalee. But it is quite evident from the detailed description of damage, enclosed with his despatches, that his ships required extensive refit before they could take their place in the line. At this long distance it is impossible to say whether the re-fitting was carried out as expeditiously as it might have been, but, without very strong evidence to the contrary, and bearing in mind Hughes's character, a charge of laxity should not be brought against him.

He had a much clearer idea of war than the Indian authorities. Once it was decided to make Trincomalee the base of the British fleet, it should have been made secure from attack. A fleet cannot operate over a wide area, seeking out the enemy, fighting battles, covering transports, and, at the same time, be responsible for the protection of its base.

With the change of the monsoon the Madras anchorage  
 Oct. 15 became unsafe for ships of the line, and on the 15th of October  
 Dec. 17 Hughes sailed for Bombay. On his arrival there on the 17th of  
 December he was joined by Bickerton with five sail of the line,  
 giving him a superiority of four ships. Meanwhile Suffren,  
 finding insufficient resources at Trincomalee, had decided to  
 winter at Achen in Sumatra. During the voyage the *Bizarre*,  
 sixty-four guns, was wrecked.

Nov. 24 On the 24th of November a frigate arrived from France with

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, 'Sultan off Ceylon, October 20, 1782.'

bad news for the French Admiral. De Grasse had been defeated at the Battle of The Saints, a convoy with essential stores had been captured, and de Bussy, who was to command in India, was ill at Mauritius. The news of the loss of the convoy was particularly unpalatable to Suffren, and he wrote to de Bussy that he would be unable to operate unless a supply of anchors, cables, rope and copper was forthcoming. Though in possession of Trincomalee, he was feeling the strain of operating without a properly equipped base. 1782

Hyder Ali died on the 7th of December, and was succeeded by his son Tippoo Sahib, who carried on the policy of co-operation with the French.

On the 20th of December the French Admiral once more put to sea and anchored off Ganjam on the 15th of February, in order to establish relations with the new Nabob. On passage he captured a British East Indiaman and a frigate. He afterwards touched at Pondicherry, Cuddalore and Porto Novo, and finally came to anchor at Trincomalee on the 23rd. He was joined there, on the 10th of March, by three of the line and thirty-five transports, carrying 2,500 troops under General de Bussy. The army was destined for Cuddalore, and the whole fleet sailed on the 14th and anchored off Porto Novo on the 16th. Dec. 20 1783 Feb. 15 Feb. 23 Mar. 10 Mar. 16

After disembarking the troops at Porto Novo and the baggage and stores at Cuddalore, Suffren returned to Trincomalee. On passage he wrote a despatch which shows that, whilst he had been able to obtain stores and spars, he was very short of men. 'I am proceeding to Trincomalee where I will hasten the refit of the ships. I hope to refit completely, but a disquieting fact is the shortage of personnel. Supposing that the sick will soon return to duty, and taking men from transports and useless frigates, I will still be short of 1,200 men. During the thirteen months we have been in the Indies we have received no recruits. If the King wishes to maintain a fleet of fifteen to eighteen ships in the Indies, at least 3,000 men a year are required to keep the ships up to complement, especially if, as in the past year, there are four battles to be fought. The fleet is now well provided.

1783 We are only short of shot and spare topmasts. I wait impatiently for the promised supplies. More than anything, good ships of the line, coppered frigates, and men are required.' <sup>1</sup>

Though he could refit his ships, their hulls were in a bad state. The majority had not been careened for three or four years. The *Illustre* and *Saint Michel* were leaky, the latter so bad that the pumps were kept going day and night.

Mar. 20 Hughes put to sea on the 20th of March, and, hearing on passage that Suffren had detached two ships to blockade Madras, shaped  
April 13 course for that port and anchored there on the 13th of April. On the 16th he was joined by the *Bristol*, fifty guns, which had escorted a convoy from England.

With a superior fleet in Indian waters and the knowledge that Tippoo Sahib was not likely to be such a determined opponent as his father had been, the Madras authorities decided to take the offensive and attempt to drive the French out of the Carnatic. The first objective was the reduction of Cuddalore, and the plan agreed on was that the army should march south from Madras, whilst Hughes covered the operations and prevented interference with the storeships and victuallers.

May 15 On the 15th of May, when off Cuddalore, Hughes heard from a Portuguese vessel that Suffren was fitting out with the intention of relieving the garrison. He at once shaped course for Trincomalee, but found, on his arrival there on the 25th, that Suffren was still at anchor and in too strong a position to attack. He then cruised to intercept reinforcements or supply ships. On  
June 1 the 1st of June he received intelligence from two Englishmen, who had escaped from the French fleet in a boat, that a '74,' two frigates and two storeships had slipped out of Trincomalee. Certain that Cuddalore was the destination of this small squadron,  
June 3 he bore away in chase, and on the 3rd sighted some French ships but lost them again in the heavy weather. He remained  
June 9 on his cruising ground to the south of Cuddalore until the 9th of June and then anchored off Porto Novo 'to cover our own squadron and engage the enemy before they could anchor there.' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

<sup>2</sup> Hughes's Despatch, 'Superb in Madras Road, July 25, 1782.'

In the meantime the army had drawn close round Cuddalore and it was completely invested. 1783

Whilst at Trincomalee, Suffren received news of the arrival of the *Bristol* and her convoy in Indian waters. He accordingly despatched two ships of the line and two frigates to cruise off Madras to intercept this squadron, but they failed to sight their quarry. This detachment returned on the 10th of June, and on the same day Suffren called a council of war. He read letters from de Bussy in which the situation on the coast was described as critical as Cuddalore was closely invested by land and sea. The council decided that the fleet should weigh at once 'to proceed to the attack of the enemy fleet, the only means of saving the army and Cuddalore.'<sup>1</sup> June 10

The captains were no doubt inspired by the words of their leader:—'The critical state of the King's affairs demands that we all work together. Show that the honour of being French is of more value than the superiority in ships the enemy can boast of. The army under the walls of Cuddalore is lost if we do not go to its help. The glory of saving it is perhaps reserved for us; we must attempt it.'<sup>1</sup>

Suffren weighed on the 11th, and came in sight of the British fleet anchored off Porto Novo on the 13th. Hughes, not wishing to be caught in harbour, got under weigh and anchored again about five miles off the town. Suffren remained in the offing and sent a letter to de Bussy asking for a reinforcement of men. On the evening of the 17th he anchored off Cuddalore and took on board 600 Europeans and 600 sepoys. This welcome addition to his depleted ships' companies was at once distributed round the squadron. He weighed again next morning, and for two days the two fleets manœuvred against one another in variable light winds. On the afternoon of the 20th a steady westerly wind sprang up, and about 4 p.m. Suffren ran down towards the British fleet from his position to windward. Hughes's line was well-formed on the port tack heading to the northward, and the French ships turned up at point-blank range, each ship picking out an opponent. Hard fighting at once became general all along the line. June 11  
June 13  
June 17  
June 20

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

1783 After a two hours' combat, in which the losses on both sides were extremely heavy, the fleets separated. In the Battle of Cuddalore the British lost 99 killed and 494 wounded, and the French 102 killed and 386 wounded. Suffren anchored off Pondicherry next morning, and on the 23rd returned to Cuddalore.

Hughes, on the other hand, with 1121 sick, of whom 645 'were in the last stage of scurvy,'<sup>1</sup> his companies unable to go to quarters as they were 'dying daily,'<sup>1</sup> no water 'except a few casks in the ground tiers,'<sup>1</sup> shaped course for Madras.

Suffren had won the last round. British supply ships were unable to enter the Cuddalore roadstead, and those that were already there took flight when the French fleet anchored, but the full effect of Suffren's strategical and tactical success was never felt, as peace had been signed many months before the date of this last battle.

June 25 Hughes arrived at Madras on the 25th, and there he received news that the Preliminary Articles of Peace had been signed. He at once ordered the frigate *Medea* to proceed to Cuddalore and inform de Bussy, Suffren, and the British General Stuart that the long war was over.

There is much that is interesting in this Indian Ocean campaign both strategically and tactically.

Suffren, unlike his brother Admirals, kept his enemy's organised force as his one object throughout the campaign. It was close action for him, 'pistol shot' as he called it, if he got a chance. His methods of attack demanded initiative from his captains, and these, long trained in drill-book manœuvres, failed to respond to his leadership. Of the action off Trincomalee he wrote:— 'All, yes all, were able to approach, since we were to windward and ahead, but none did so. I can only attribute this terrible occurrence to the wish to end the campaign, to unwillingness and ignorance, for I do not dare to suspect anything worse.'<sup>2</sup>

His tactical plan of concentrating on the rear, which succeeded in the first battle and only failed in the second and fourth battles through the mishandling of the ships, was thought out

<sup>1</sup> Hughes's Despatch, '*Superb* in Madras Road, July 25, 1783.'

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

and confided to his juniors beforehand. 'If we are fortunate enough to be to windward,' he wrote to Du Tromelin, 'as they are only eight or nine in number at the most, my intention is to double on their rear. Supposing that your division is the rear one, you will be able to see from your position what number of ships overlap the enemy line, and you will signal to them to double. If we are to leeward and if our ships are able, by crowding sail, to double the enemy, and if they are either not attacked at all, or only from a distance and weakly, you will be able to make them tack so as to double to windward. Finally, in any case, I request you to order those manœuvres to your division which you consider the best calculated to assure the success of the action.'<sup>1</sup> This decentralisation to a subordinate was new to the period. As he himself said, he ought to have destroyed several British ships with the concentration he obtained by the manœuvre.

But despite his signal to do so, some of his captains would not go into 'pistol-range.' At the second and fourth battles, when the fleet was running down towards the British line, all the ships put their helms down and turned up as soon as the first shot was fired, though several were astern of station. At the last battle, though he had made out orders for a concentration despite his inferiority of numbers, he did not put his plan into execution, and it is reasonable to suppose that by that time he had despaired of obtaining obedience and support from his captains.

He was a man who was always ready to take full responsibility for his actions. He disregarded peremptory orders from his Government to return to Mauritius to refit. He knew that by so doing he would leave the coast clear for the British fleet and possibly alienate Hyder Ali, to whom he had given a promise that he would remain in close support. Instead he took Trincomalee from his enemy and used it as his base.

In three of the five actions Hughes commanded the weaker fleet, in four he was in the leeward position when battle was joined, and so he had little opportunity of showing whether he

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lacour-Gayet in *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XVI.*

1783 was an original tactician. Before the third action he had the windward position, and his attack was made in the orthodox manner. But he proved himself a fine fighting seaman and one who was able to manœuvre a fleet well, train it for battle, and produce efficient captains. His reputation as a strategist suffered from his conduct of the operations in the last phase of the campaign.

After the battle of Cuddalore, it was the superior British fleet that left the disputed area. Doubtless the sick list was very large and the ships in need of spars and water, but Suffren was working under similar general conditions. Suffren anchored in the water that should have been occupied by Hughes, and the British army was thereby imperilled. Furthermore, Suffren, though in the presence of a superior fleet, was able to embark a large number of men from Cuddalore before the final action.

Bailli de Suffren was a sea-commander of exceptional powers. During the long campaign in Indian waters he attained a moral superiority over his enemies. His reputation for 'going for his object' affected those pitted against him. General Stuart, when opposite Cuddalore, wrote: 'The presence of such a man obliges us to make our approaches with the greatest prudence.'

In the recently published *Memoirs of William Hickey* there is an interesting account of his interview with Suffren in January, 1783. Suffren, speaking of Hughes, said:—'I have been very much astonished to hear several of your countrymen speak in cool, if not disrespectful terms of that commander whom I have always considered and found to be a brave, skilful, and in every respect a very able officer. It has been my fate to be opposed to him in three different hard-contested battles, in every one of which Sir Edward Hughes, in my humble opinion, gave positive proof that he possessed consummate skill and abilities equal to any names I have ever had to deal with in my profession. . . .'

He spoke at length on the operations, and the following extracts are of interest:—

Of Porto Praya—'I at once knew it must be the squadron of Commodore Johnston who I was going out to counteract the measures of, but how to account for a seaman's taking such

a berth as Mr. Johnston had, leaving his convoy liable to be partially cut off and destroyed in any other manner, than from a wish to take the utmost care of himself, I knew not.' 1783

'Three of the Commanders for ever disgraced themselves involving therein the noble families to which they were allied. These poltroons hung back and never brought their ships within gunshot of the enemy.'

Of his arrival on his station :—' I had no port into which I could put for repairs, for provisions, or upon any account whatever nearer than Mauritius. I had eleven ships, several of them exceedingly leaky and in want of stores and so weak from the sad number of hands we lost at Porto Praya I could scarcely manœuvre my ships. I nevertheless determined to steer for and engage Sir Edward.'

Of the first battle :—' Had not three of my captains betrayed their base cowardice I should have obtained a decisive victory. I treated those villains, those traitors to their sovereign and country, as they deserved by despatching them with ignominy and disgrace to France.'

Neither Suffren nor Hughes saw any further active service. Hughes was promoted to Admiral of the Blue and lived to the age of seventy-four. He amassed a moderate fortune in the East Indies to comfort him in his old age.

Suffren, who had been promoted to Chef d'escadre in 1782 and Lieutenant-General in 1783 was specially promoted to Vice-Admiral in 1784. As Vice-Admiral he took precedence immediately after a Marshal of France. His exploits in Indian waters were soon on the lips of every Frenchman, and he became a national hero. He died at the comparatively early age of sixty.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE PEACE

1782 **AMONGST** the demands made upon the King by Rockingham, when he assumed office in March 1782, was that the independence of America should be acknowledged. Ever since 1779 movements had been on foot to find an avenue for opening pourparlers, but these did not take concrete form until 1781 when a resolution in favour of peace was carried in the House of Commons. Lord North then took some steps, but, with the advent of Rockingham, definite action was taken in the form of an Act enabling the King to make peace or bring about a truce. After the surrender at Yorktown in October of the previous year operations in North America had come to a standstill, though Carleton and Washington were still facing one another with their armies in the North, and Greene was watching Leslie at Charleston.

Fox, as Foreign Minister, worked hard to bring about a cessation of hostilities from the day he took office. His first efforts were directed towards making peace with Holland through the mediation of the Empress Catherine II of Russia, but negotiations were at first slow. In April a certain Mr. Richard Oswald was sent to Paris to confer with Franklin and Vergennes. A discussion took place during which Franklin proposed that Canada should be ceded to the United States in the Treaty. Shelburne did not even think this proposal worth placing before the Government.

May In May, Thomas Grenville was sent to Paris by Fox who, as head of the Department for Foreign Affairs, was really responsible for the negotiations.

Whilst Vergennes and Franklin worked amicably up to a

point, Adams and Jay, the other two American negotiators, 1782  
were distrustful of the French intentions, and, whilst they were  
still a long way from arriving at a settlement, Rockingham died,  
and the negotiations came temporarily to an end.

This was on the 1st of July, and a hiatus followed whilst the July 1  
King and the various political leaders conferred, intrigued and  
manœuvred in an effort to form a new Government.

Fox, Richmond, Lord North and Shelburne were all nominated  
by their friends, and eventually the King sent for Shelburne.  
Fox refused to serve under Shelburne and so also did the Duke  
of Portland, Burke and Sheridan. But others of the old adminis-  
tration remained, and the principal offices were filled by Lord  
Grantham and Thomas Townshend as Secretaries of State, and  
Pitt, aged twenty-three, as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The general situation when the new Government took office  
on the 11th of July was favourable to a continuation of the July 11  
negotiations. France was disheartened at the defeat of de Grasse,  
Spain despaired of taking Gibraltar, and Holland was under  
pressure from Russia. The American leaders were also tired  
of the war and had much to contend with in internal unrest  
and lack of supplies. All the belligerents were longing for peace,  
but negotiations would probably have dragged on for many  
months if a letter to Vergennes from Marbois, the French chargé  
d'affaires in America, had not been intercepted. Marbois  
recommended Vergennes to resist certain of the American claims  
to territory in the valleys of the Mississippi and the Ohio. On  
reading this letter the American negotiators came to the con-  
clusion that the French Ministry was no longer in whole-hearted  
sympathy with their demands, and decided to make a separate  
peace, though they thereby disavowed a clause in the Treaty  
of Alliance.

On the 30th of November provisional articles of peace were Nov. 30  
signed between the United States and Great Britain.

The independence of the United States was acknowledged,  
generous boundaries were agreed to, and fishing rights on the  
Newfoundland Banks and Gulf of St. Lawrence were granted.  
Furthermore, the treaty stated that Congress would earnestly

1782 recommend to the legislatures of the respective states that the property of British subjects should be restored to them, and that there should be no further prosecutions of or confiscations from those who took part against the Colonists in the war. The signatories were Richard Oswald, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Henry Laurens.

1783  
Feb. Consequent on the signing of this treaty a cessation of hostilities was proclaimed by the King on the 14th of February, 1783, and by Congress a week later.

The French Ministers were much upset at the independent action of the American negotiators, but continued to discuss peace terms on their own account.

Jan. 20 At last, on the 20th of January, 1783, provisional articles of peace between Great Britain and France and Spain were signed at Versailles. The signatories were Alleyne Fitzherbert, Vergennes, and the Comte d'Aranda.

Jan. 27 On the 27th these articles of peace were tabled in Parliament, and the Opposition carried several amendments after a heated debate. In February a resolution of censure on the peace terms was moved by Lord John Cavendish. Three days later Shelburne resigned, and the signing of the peace treaties was once more suspended.

April More comings and goings of Ministers and their friends followed, and finally a new Ministry was formed in April with the Duke of Portland as First Lord of the Treasury, Lord North, Home Secretary, Fox, Foreign Secretary, Lord John Cavendish, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Keppel at the Admiralty.

During the interregnum many disturbances occurred amongst the civil population and the naval and military forces. There were several cases of mutiny in regiments ordered abroad, and, at Portsmouth, Lord Howe had a difficult task to keep order in the fleet. In the *Raisonnable*, Captain Lord Hervey, the spirit of mutiny was so bad that three men were hung after court martial.

Sept. 3 The negotiations dragged on until the 3rd of September, when at last the Definitive Peace Treaties were signed between Great

Britain and the Allies except Holland. With the latter power negotiations were still in the preliminary stage. The terms of the Final Drafts were much the same as those contained in the provisional articles. The signatories were the Duke of Manchester, Vergennes, and the Comte d'Aranda for the treaties with France and Spain, and D. Hartley, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay for the treaty with the United States.

France obtained the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon and certain fishing rights in Newfoundland. In the West Indies she obtained St. Lucia and Tobago; in Africa, Senegal and Goree; in India her establishments in Orissa, Bengal, Pondicherry, Karikal, Mahé, and Surat, and some trade advantages.

Spain obtained Minorca. In America she retained West Florida, and East Florida was ceded to her. She gave up her claim to the Bahamas. She had captured these islands in May, 1782, but they had been recaptured by a British force a year later. She conceded to Great Britain the right to cut logwood in the Bay of Honduras.

The United States obtained independence, generous boundaries, and fishing concessions.

Great Britain retained Dominica, Grenada, the Grenadines, St. Vincent, St. Christopher, Nevis, and Montserrat.

The signing of the treaties came as a godsend to all the belligerents, for, without exception, they were exhausted and disorganised. The war, fought over an enormous area, had called for immense exertions. Treasuries and man-power were drained. France had entered the war to assist the Colonists to obtain their independence. This had now been granted by the British Government. As to conquests and losses in the West and East Indies, they practically balanced.

Spain entered the war ostensibly for the same reason as France, but it was the glittering prizes of Gibraltar, Minorca, and Jamaica that really caused her to fall to the persuasions of her old ally. She had conquered Minorca. The garrison at Gibraltar had held out against all attacks. The conquest of Jamaica would necessitate new and costly efforts.

Holland appeared in a poor light at the negotiations. She

1783 had been forced into the war, had failed to co-operate in the final operations, and had lost a great deal of her trade.

For the European Powers it had been a long and disastrous war with nothing to show for all the lives and treasure that had been expended. For the British Colonists in America it had been a hard and, at times, a desperate struggle which had ended in the birth of a new nation.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE CAUSES OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

SUCH success as attended the British effort during the War of American Independence was primarily due to the leadership of three men—Howe, Rodney, and Hood. Inefficient dockyards, empty storehouses, ships in an unseaworthy condition and short of complement, inadequate bases, ill-considered orders arriving by every packet from home—all these conspired together to make their task doubly difficult. But these three men succeeded under conditions which would have daunted men of lesser determination, judgment, and vision.

They were well supported in their arduous task by a corps of officers, amongst whom were many who were destined to become famous. The war gave invaluable opportunities to those men who were soon to be called on to command the big fleets during the French Revolutionary War, and the young men who were destined for high command during the Napoleonic War had seized the chances offered them to win their spurs.

For political reasons Howe was not employed during the most vital years, but his direction of the operations against d'Estaing and those for the relief of Gibraltar served to emphasise what had already been made clear during the Seven Years War. He was a great leader. He was a determined and skilled seaman. He earned the trust of every one who came in contact with him. When the country was in real danger and a man was wanted his name was on everyone's lips. 'Give us Black Dick' was actually cried in Parliament; 'Where is Howe?' wrote Kempenfelt.

Amongst all the great figures in history there are only a very few of whom it has been recorded that their countrymen turned instinctively to them in the hour of danger. Howe's name lives

in the memory of his countrymen mainly on account of his great victory known as the Battle of the First of June, but that day when the people called for him was the red-letter day in a remarkable career.

Samuel Hood, whose letters have been so frequently quoted, was only once in supreme command, at St. Kitts, but that one occasion set the seal on his reputation as a leader of skill and imagination. 'The most masterly manœuvre I ever saw,' wrote one of his captains, and French sea officers were equally lavish in their praise. He was a great correspondent, and his private letters have been freely quoted as they explain and expand much of the information in the more formal official despatches. He was a merciless critic, and his letters produce the impression of a man singularly devoid of loyalty. But most of the letters quoted were marked 'private and confidential,' and were addressed to men on whose discretion he could rely. He was frequently driven to desperation by what to him appeared almost criminal stupidity or unwillingness to decide the issue by hard fighting. As second in command at the Battle of the Chesapeake, one of the decisive battles of the world, his part was to walk up and down the poop and watch Graves lose opportunity after opportunity and then, after the battle was over, continue to lose every chance that remained of achieving success by sailing away from the sound of the guns. Again, as second in command at the Battle of The Saints, he was condemned to watch the enemy fleet retreating in disorder and no effort made to follow up the success obtained early in the day.

His outstanding characteristic was his power of forming his officers into a band of brothers, and his belief in the men he took so much trouble to teach and guide. 'I would without hesitation have attacked the enemy from my knowledge how much was to be expected from an English squadron commanded by men amongst whom is no other contention than who should be most forward in rendering services to his King and Country.' Howe, too, possessed that invaluable characteristic. Neither of these great leaders thought it necessary to shroud their thoughts in mystery when operations were afoot. Captains, commanders,

and even midshipmen were sent for, so that every subordinate should know what was expected of him. We have seen the result.

Amongst the captains may be noted John Jervis, afterwards the great Earl of St. Vincent, displaying that firmness of character which was to develop into an austerity masking a large heart and a very human kindliness of thought. Also William Hotham, afterwards Nelson's Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, proving himself, time after time, a first-class organiser of that most difficult of all operations—landing large numbers of troops and guns in the face of the enemy. Also Hyde Parker, afterwards Nelson's Commander-in-Chief at Copenhagen, revealing his powers of leadership in various minor operations.

Famous names, too, are to be found amongst those of the younger men whose individual acts brought them under the notice of their seniors. There was Pellew, a youthful hero at the Battle of the Lakes destined one day to be the famous Lord Exmouth; Saumarez, risking his life at the bombardment of Fort Moultrie and showing striking initiative at the Battle of The Saints, afterwards Admiral Lord Saumarez; Collingwood as a young commander in the Caribbean; and Nelson, by sheer grit and skill, turning the badly designed Nicaragua expedition into something of a success.

With such a personnel much more might have been achieved, but the higher direction of the war was unfortunately not in capable hands. The great strategical failure lay in ignoring the principles enacted by Anson, Hawke, and Boscawen in the previous war. They had proved that the operational areas of the big fleets should be such as to prevent freedom of movement to the enemy and consequently concentration. In their day the Brest fleet and the detachments at L'Orient were the special object of the Channel fleet working with an inshore squadron of frigates. The Toulon fleet was either watched directly or a fleet based on Gibraltar controlled its power to concentrate with the Atlantic seaboard squadrons. Sandwich and his advisers employed other methods, with the result that the French and Spanish fleets concentrated or separated at will and kept the British Government in a constant state of anxiety. It is true that the British



Navy was at a low ebb and that it was difficult to find ships for all quarters of the globe, but there were many occasions when the enemy's freedom of movement could have been curtailed by the proper use of the available ships.

Tactically the war taught a great deal. On the one hand, the failures of Arbuthnot and Graves brought home to naval officers that it was high time the spectres of Matthews and Byng were laid to rest and that there was something more in sea battle than manœuvring two lines so that each ship could engage her opposite number. On the other hand, the tactical imagination displayed by Rodney cannot have failed to make a lasting impression on the personnel. Not once, but twice did Rodney break away from the hard-and-fast rules which had enslaved British sea commanders and turned them into mediocrities. His plan for a line abreast attack on the rear when fighting de Guichen, and his break through when fighting de Grasse, showed an initiative remarkable in those days of stereotyped tactics. Neither succeeded fully for one reason and one reason only.

Rodney was a great man, but it is evident that he did not inspire confidence in his subordinates or earn their love and respect. 'My eye on them had more dread than the enemy's fire and they knew it would be fatal'; 'My own captain is amongst the slow ones. I have given him notice that he shall not remain my captain'; 'I require obedience only, I don't want advice.'

Though a difficult man to serve with, he was an accomplished and distinguished gentleman, who, but for that one defect of not taking his juniors into his confidence, might have earned a still higher place in the short list of great sea-commanders. His love of money was responsible for much that detracts from an otherwise brilliant career. It was the cause of his one failure as a young man, when he dislocated the plans for the capture of Havana by sending his ships far and wide to seek for prizes, instead of keeping them concentrated as he was ordered. The painful story of St. Eustatius has been told in these pages. A lesser man than Rodney could not have survived the uproar that followed that episode.

His name will always be associated with the Battle of The

Saints, but, as we have already seen, his conduct of the fleet in the closing stages of that famous contest was not above reproach. His reputation as a great sea-commander rests more securely on his achievement off Cape St. Vincent, his dogged determination to seek out and fight the enemy throughout the campaign in the West Indies, and his tactical skill. The affair with the Spanish fleet was of minor importance, but the order to continue the chase until his ships were in danger on a lee shore could only have been given by a commander determined to take many risks to achieve his purpose.

During the war there was a marked advance in the manufacture of ordnance and the methods of loading and firing the broadsides. For this, and for many improvements in training and discipline, Richard Kempenfelt was mainly responsible. He was a man of remarkable vision and knowledge, coupled with tireless energy. His ideas on discipline and ship management permeated a large part of the personnel. In a period of over-centralisation his letter on the devolution of command might have been written at the present day. 'The only way to keep large bodies of men in order is by dividing and sub-dividing them with officers over each to inspect into and regulate their conduct, to discipline and form them.

'Let the ship's company be divided into as many companies as there are lieutenants—except the first lieutenant whose care should extend over the whole.

'Each lieutenant's company should be formed of the men who are under his command at quarters for action. These companies should be reviewed every day by the lieutenant when the men are to appear tight and clean . . . the officers, by thus reviewing their men daily, would become acquainted with the character and behaviour of each individual.'<sup>1</sup>

His sound view that a proportion of the fleet should always be kept in full commission as a training squadron was not accepted by the authorities, but, if it had been, officers would have been spared the heartbreaking work of organising and training a raw personnel every time there was a cloud on the political horizon.

<sup>1</sup> Kempenfelt to Middleton, December 28, 1779 ? [N.R.S., vol. xxxiii.].

He was an unsparing critic, but, like Hood, the letters containing his inmost thoughts were written to men who could be relied on not to divulge their contents. He had greater trials to bear than Hood. He was twice called on to serve as Chief of the Staff to men physically unequal to the strain of high command when the country was in great danger.

Appointments such as those of Geary and Hardy are by no means unique in British naval history. The previous war had supplied classic examples of bad judgment in selecting commanders. Pitt had been convinced that the qualities of youth, activity and a fiery spirit were essential in a man charged with the command of amphibious operations, landing in boats in face of the enemy's fire and probably wading the last hundred yards. The King had been equally determined to appoint veteran officers, whose principal qualifications were that they had served under the Duke of Cumberland. On one occasion a war-worn veteran of over seventy years of age had been entrusted with the command of an operation involving a landing in surf water on a rocky coast. The first three expeditions had come to grief because the King's will prevailed, but finally Pitt's nominée, Wolfe, had been appointed with the well-known result. But though the history of the Seven Years War must have been fresh in the minds of Sandwich and his colleagues, the lesson was not taken to heart, and they preferred to follow the bad example of the King and ignore all that Pitt had taught them.

No doubt the field of selection for the higher commands was narrowed down by the refusal of Howe, Barrington and many other flag officers to trust their reputations in the hands of Sandwich, but we can hardly believe it was so restricted as to necessitate the appointment of men, who were known to be unfit, physically and mentally.

The French and Spanish Governments were no wiser. D'Orvilliers was sixty-eight when he sailed from Brest in 1778. 'I will run like an old man who is afraid of the cold,' he wrote, 'and is unable to undertake a hard day's work.' Of Cordova, 'I must inform you that M. de Cordova is an old man of seventy-four or seventy-five. He enjoys the esteem and regard of the

whole Spanish Navy. But you will easily imagine he has several defects inseparable from great age.'

During the opening phases of the war the Government adopted the old familiar plan of attempting to exercise pressure with inadequate means. It is a course of action that has always ended in disaster. It always will. Graves and Gage were not, perhaps, first-class men, but they were called on to attempt the impossible, and, as usual, they received short shrift from those who directed or rather misdirected from armchairs 3,000 miles away.

In the early days of the trouble with the colonists there were many who were strongly of opinion that, once it was decided to use force, the navy should apply the pressure, and no attempt made to transport and keep supplied a large army on the American continent. This view was probably correct, for the conditions under which the war commenced were such that an adequate sea force patrolling the coast, upholding the King's authority in seaport towns, and cutting off all communications with the outside world might well have succeeded where the army and an inadequate sea force failed. Such a course would certainly have avoided all the ugly incidents that occurred, and the bitter feelings that were aroused, when the Hessian troops appeared in the country. Later on it was the opinion of many statesmen that the task of conquering the colonists was beyond the capability of the country. 'You may ravage,' said Pitt in 1777, 'you cannot conquer. It is impossible. You cannot conquer the Americans. I might as well talk of driving them before me with this crutch.' Once the colonists were organised for war under Washington, their conquest by an army transported and maintained by sea became a task which demanded vast resources and extremely good generalship.

That again presupposes a government at home of unswerving resolution, unquestioned patriotism, and incorruptible integrity. Such governments this country has often possessed, especially in times of danger and at critical conjunctures. But the struggle in America—that is to say, the first political convulsion in Britain overseas—took place with tragic fatality at a time when the

domestic administration of this country was in a state of flux in a state of transition from oligarchy to democracy. The system whereby the free-spoken Parliament of Great Britain had been converted into an instrument for registering the decrees of the 'governing classes' had been dangerous enough when the man at the helm was a capable statesman like Walpole. The ship of state headed straight for the rocks when the tried public servant was replaced by the court functionary. Lord North had all the faults of Walpole without any of his vision or ability, and, unlike Walpole, he remained in office when the unfamiliar floods and shifting banks of war demanded the services of a pilot.

George III evaded the dangers attendant upon absolute rule by delegating his responsibilities to an obsequious executive, and screened that executive by a Parliamentary submissiveness obtained by the methods which Walpole had bequeathed. Such methods were soon to be swept away for ever by far-reaching reforms—social, political and economic. But in the meantime the fate of our oversea empire turned upon the ability of George III to choose as his councillors honest men who would oppose him for England's sake. For this important selective duty the King's education unfitted him; and so, when England needed statesmen with nerves of steel, she was guided by incompetent and corrupt administrators who were not even content to leave the conduct of the military operations to professional men.

Throughout the war ministers displayed an overweening desire to control every movement from London, despite the immense time taken to communicate across the Atlantic. The generals in America were continually harassed by orders, counter-orders and suggestions for useless diversions until, at last, with his patience exhausted, Clinton wrote: 'For God's sake, my Lord, leave me alone.' It is customary to look upon this evil as something that has entered naval, military and diplomatic life with wireless and cables. But it has always happened when the sense of perspective has been lost. A Government and its expert advisers can alone decide the grand strategy in war—that is to say, how the effort of the fighting forces is to be employed. They alone can determine the proportion of the effort that is

to be used in each of the disputed areas. To go further than this, to give every admiral and general detailed orders as to the employment of their units, is tantamount to ignoring the operations of the enemy, who will not remain quiescent whilst the orders are in course of transmission.

In neither service was the importance of having one supreme commander in the area of operations realised. We have seen how Rodney's arrival at New York affected Arbuthnot, how Hood bemoaned the absence of Rodney at the critical moment in North American waters, how Digby refused to allow Hood to take any of the American Station ships south, though there, and there only, could there be any use for them.

There were too many Commanders-in-Chief. It was all one area of fighting, for the seasons ordained that operations in the West Indies alternated with those on the American coast, and the same forces were employed in both. One military Commander-in-Chief and one naval Commander-in-Chief operating with the available forces, co-operating when necessary, and working under orders confined to the general plan and objects to be achieved, would probably have produced a very different result.

Indeed, Rodney went further still in his wish for unity of command. 'Permit me to add that if Administration would consider the difficulty of making different Commanders-in-Chief agree they would find it answer their own and the nation's expectations better if there was, during this very important crisis, but one Commander-in-Chief by land or sea responsible for the war both in America and every part of the West Indies.'<sup>1</sup>

In the early stages the control of the sea communications gave the British army an incalculable advantage. Given a fair wind and a good organisation for embarking and disembarking, it possessed a mobility denied to Washington's army in those days of no railways or good roads. That mobility also gave the power to surprise. The movement from New York to Philadelphia in 1777 was badly executed. The weather was against quick passage, but surprise was thrown away by wasting time

<sup>1</sup> Rodney to Germain, 'Sandwich, St. Lucia, December 22, 1780' (H.M.C. Stopford-Sackville MSS.).

over a reconnaissance that should have taken place before, and the priceless advantage of superior mobility was dissipated. This mobility was frequently used for raiding and diversionary operations, but not for major operations, and its effect on the campaign as a whole was slight.

From the outset the British were committed to a division of their land forces, and this dispersion of effort continued throughout the war in America in the form of two or more main operations accompanied by one or more diversionary operations. The army was fighting in 'little packets,' and as no use was made of the fleet to effect surprise, Washington, despite his endless internal difficulties, was able to adopt counter-measures in time.

Furthermore, as the naval operations in North American waters were, of necessity, auxiliary to those of the army, this method of conducting the campaign on land gave few opportunities of fully developing the offensive power of the fleet.

We must, however, remember that the generals on the spot and the authorities at home were under the baneful influence that is always present when a people fights its own kith and kin. Throughout the war the generals were in difficulties on this account. It must have been well-nigh impossible to gauge the temper and feelings of the inhabitants in the area of operations. Some were loyal, some were disloyal, some were avowed enemies, some were friends so long as things went right. General Howe was endeavouring to make peace and war at the same time. Cornwallis was convinced that he was dealing with a loyal people after his first campaign in Carolina. Many useless expeditions were undertaken to succour small parties of professing loyalists. But, despite all the difficulties peculiar to the fighting in America, we cannot but come to the conclusion that if full force had been used in one area and the coast blockaded, France and Spain would have been deprived of the opportunity and excuse for launching an attack on their old enemy.

If the generals had a difficult task, the admirals were no better off. From the outset they were handicapped by lack of ships, poor material, shortage of personnel, lack of docking and repairing facilities, and even, on occasions, an inadequate supply

of provisions. Moreover, though a rapid increase in military strength was effected after the outbreak of hostilities, ships and naval equipment could not be improvised. Like the generals, they were never free from the attentions of the authorities at home, who missed no opportunity of suggesting operations and questioning the conduct of the campaign.

We have seen the reason for this lamentable state of affairs. We may be thankful that the pitiful story of decline, falsified returns, misuse of patronage, and political intrigue is never likely to be repeated in our history.

To a great extent the naval war was a fight for bases. In the West Indies the British were badly off in this respect, and the capture of St. Lucia had to be undertaken early in the war. Gros Islet Bay was a safe anchorage in a good strategical position, but it was not a properly equipped base, and the British commanders were in constant difficulties owing to lack of facilities for docking and refitting. Fleet bases cannot be improvised; they must be established in peace time. The vital importance of good harbours in the area of operations where the fleet could anchor secure from the elements, and from enemy attacks, was not appreciated by all the naval commanders. On taking over the command in North America, Howe pointed out that little could be done unless a suitable fleet base was obtained, but Arbuthnot later on agreed to the evacuation of Rhode Island, which was described by Rodney as 'a fatal measure.'

In the East Indies, the early operations were all directed towards the acquisition of the invaluable base at Trincomalee. Hughes took it first and then Suffren displaced him with most unfortunate results.

How, then, did we manage to pass through these critical years without losing more? The answer is to be found in our enemy's methods of making war.

D'Estaing, de Guichen, and de Grasse were brave men. D'Estaing was not an experienced seaman, but de Guichen and de Grasse had been at sea all their lives and had commanded ships and squadrons in peace and war. These three Admirals frequently commanded superior forces, but almost always failed



to achieve tangible success. With the exception of Suffren the French leaders did not join battle with the determination to fight to a finish. Their object was attained when their antagonist was immobilised by destruction of rigging and spars, for they were then free to proceed with some other design such as the conquest of an island. That 'spar-wrecking' was enough was the prevailing thought in the French Navy. It did not matter that the enemy ships would live to fight another day, and that in the end the last round must be fought out between the most powerful weapon-carriers. It was 'enough.' If, like Suffren, the three principal French sea-commanders had kept the destruction of the British fleet as their main object, and relegated the conquest of islands to a secondary position in their plans, a very different story might have been told.

D'Estaing had two golden opportunities. At New York the acceptance of some risk might have ended the war with one blow. But the refusal of the pilots was sufficient to deter him, and Howe's fleet and the army living under its wing were left undisturbed. Later on, Byron's impetuous attack presented him with an opportunity of dealing a smashing blow to his enemy's power in the West Indies, but he was content to sail away whilst British ships lay helpless within gunshot.

In the same way, de Guichen and de Grasse, during their long periods of command, showed no desire for close action, for the fight to a finish that would once and for all settle the issue of the campaign.

In the last phase of the fighting in the West Indies, de Grasse might have risked a great deal to force action on Hood's fleet, for he knew full well that, when Rodney arrived, he would no longer be in superior numbers.

No French commander, except Suffren, showed any originality in tactics. The rigid line, the fine parade movement, was all that was attempted. We need not seek far for the reason. It is quite evident it was the result of years of erroneous teaching. The personnel were so impregnated with false doctrine that even Suffren's genius as a fleet commander was nullified by his captains who were too hide-bound to respond to his leadership.

Again, the three main enemy forces, the Franco-Spanish Home fleet, Franco-Spanish fleet in the West Atlantic, and the American army, never worked in close co-operation. If, from the outset, the Combined fleet in home waters had used its great strength to prevent the sailing of British squadrons, whilst at the same time the French fleet in America had acted in close-co-operation with Washington's army, British ministers would have been hard put to it to adopt counter-measures. Only once was close co-operation attempted, and then British dominion over the American Colonies came to an end. The big decision taken by de Grasse on that occasion should be placed in the balance against his leadership at the Battle of The Saints when attempting to arrive at a true estimate of his value as a sea-commander.

From time to time the allies effected big concentrations in European waters, so big that the ball was at their feet if they chose to act, but the offensive spirit and the fixed object were wanting, with the result that the costly efforts ended in useless parades.

The Spanish fleet was great in numbers and in guns but otherwise of little consequence. It only played a minor part in the war. British squadrons relieved Gibraltar three times, and each time sailed past a superior fleet anchored in Cadiz harbour. Cordova only undertook operations when his large fleet was still further increased by French reinforcements. The presence of the French ships infused some energy into the Spanish personnel and supplied the moral backing, without which Cordova would not stir.

Major operations were frequently abandoned on account of heavy sick-lists. Fleets and ships were often immobilised for weeks by epidemics which soon spread in badly ventilated, ill-kept, living quarters.

Considering the long experience the belligerents had had of maintaining fleets in tropical waters, it is surprising that this vital factor of health was not studied more carefully. Conditions were difficult in the sailing era. Fresh water and fresh provisions were not always at hand. But, even so, the enormous

sick lists point to lack of interest and intelligence in dealing with the matter. The fleets of Cordova and Solano suffered far more from the ravages of disease than from British broadsides.

These are some of the more obvious causes which operated, in a greater or lesser degree, to reduce the enemy's battle power, but it is in the grand strategy that we find the root cause of the failure of these great fleets. The phrases 'limited war' and 'unlimited war' which are frequently used are meaningless. It is the object of the war which can be 'limited' or 'unlimited.'

Great Britain commenced hostilities with the limited object of subduing the revolting colonists, and was soon forced to adopt a defensive attitude and confine her object to protecting her possessions.

France entered the war with a limited object of aiding the colonists in their struggle, added a limited object of acquiring some of the British possessions overseas, and then an unlimited object of completely crushing her opponent.

Spain entered the war with a limited object of acquiring Gibraltar, Minorca, and, later on, Jamaica, though ostensibly her object was the same as that of her ally.

It thus came about that the Allies were fighting with different objects, and if we want to find one single explanation of their non-success it lies in this failure to co-operate strategically.

If France and Spain had co-operated closely and thrown their full weight into the war with the same limited objects or the same unlimited objects, Great Britain would have had a hard task to extricate herself from her ring of enemies. As it was, an inferior fleet, led by men who believed that victory could only be achieved by the destruction of the enemy's organised force and manned by men who gloried in hard fighting, defeated a superior fleet, in which the bravery of the individual was frequently brought to nought by a fundamental misconception of the purpose that should have animated every soul, from admiral to cabin-boy, from the day it was apparent that the issue would be decided by sea-battle.

## APPENDICES

NOTE.—Where not otherwise stated, the names opposite the ships are those of the Commanding Officers. In some cases (e.g. Appendices IX and X), the constitution and organization of the fleet varied from time to time. French authorities differ considerably as to the spelling of officers' names.

### APPENDIX I

#### BRITISH AND AMERICAN FLEETS ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, 1776

British		American	
Ship <i>Inflexible</i>	18 12 pdrs.	Schooner <i>Royal Savage</i>	8 6-pdrs.
Schooner <i>Maria</i>	14 6-pdrs.	(Burnt at Valicour)	
Schooner <i>Carleton</i>	12 6-pdrs.	Schooner <i>Revenge</i>	4 6-pdrs.
	6 24-pdrs.		4 4-pdrs.
Radeau <i>Thunderer</i>	6 12-pdrs.	Sloop	10 4-pdrs.
	2 howitzers	(Escaped to Ticonderoga)	
Gondola <i>Loyal Convert</i>	7 9-pdrs.	Cutter <i>Lee</i>	1 9-pdr.
Twenty gunboats with a brass field-piece or howitzer each			1 12-pdr.
Four long boats with carriage gun			2 6-pdrs.
		(Abandoned. Burnt.)	
		Galley <i>Congress</i>	2 18-pdrs.
			8 12-pdrs.
		(Run ashore. Burnt.)	
		Galley <i>Washington</i>	1 18-pdr.
			1 12-pdr.
			2 9-pdrs.
			6 6-pdrs.
		(Taken)	
		Galley <i>Trumble</i>	1 18-pdr.
			1 12-pdr.
			2 9-pdrs.
			6 6-pdrs.
		(Escaped to Ticonderoga)	
		Eight Gondolas with 18-pdrs. and 9-pdrs. (One taken, one sunk, four burnt)	
		Schooner <i>Liberty</i>	8 4-pdrs.

## APPENDIX II

## SIR PETER PARKER'S SQUADRON AT CHARLESTON, 1776

Ship	Guns	Commander	Killed	Wounded
<i>Bristol</i>	50	Sir P. Parker	40	71
		John Morris		
<i>Experiment</i>	50	Alexander Scott	23	56
<i>Active</i>	28	William Williams	1	6
<i>Solebay</i>	28	Thomas Symonds		8
<i>Actaeon</i>	28	Christopher Atkins		
<i>Syren</i>	28	Tobias Furneaux		
<i>Sphinx</i>	20	Anthony Hunt		
<i>Friendship</i>	22	Charles Hope		
<i>Ranger</i> , sloop	8	Roger Miles		
<i>Thunder</i> , bomb	8	James Reid		
<i>St. Lawrence</i> , schooner	6	John Graves		

## APPENDIX III

## LORD HOWE'S FLEET AT NEW YORK, JULY, 1776

<i>Eagle</i>	64	Viscount Howe, Vice-Admiral of the Blue
		Henry Duncan.
<i>Bristol</i>	50	Sir Peter Parker, Commodore
		Tobias Caulfield
<i>Preston</i>	50	William Hotham, Commodore
		Samuel Uppleby
<i>Asia</i>	64	George Vandeput
<i>Chatham</i>	50	J. Raynor
<i>Centurion</i>	50	R. Braithwaite
<i>Experiment</i>	50	A. Scott
<i>Isis</i>	50	Charles Douglas
<i>Renown</i>	50	F. Banks
<i>Phoenix</i>	44	Hyde Parker
<i>Roebuck</i>	44	Andrew Hamond
<i>Rainbow</i>	44	Sir George Collier

Fourteen 32-gun frigates

Thirteen 28-gun frigates

Thirteen 20-gun frigates

Seventeen sloops

Two bomb-ketches

One hospital ship

Ten small craft

## APPENDIX IV

## THE OPPOSING FLEETS IN OCTOBER, 1778. NORTH AMERICA

	British		French	
<i>Eagle</i>	64	Viscount Howe, Vice-Admiral of the Blue	80	Comte d'Estaing, Vice-Admiral
		H. Duncan		De Croy
		R. Curtis	80	Comte de Breugnon, chef d'esc.
<i>Trident</i>	64	John Eliot, Commodore		Comte de Bruyères
		A. P. Molloy		
<i>Preston</i>	50	W. Hotham, Commodore	74	Comte de Broves, chef d'escadre
		S. Uppleby		de Raimondis
<i>Cornwall</i>	74	T. Edwards		Barras de Saint Laurent
<i>Nonsuch</i>	64	W. Griffith	74	
<i>Raisonné</i>	64	T. Fitzherbert		
<i>Somerset</i>	64	G. Ourry		
<i>St. Albans</i>	64	R. Onslow	74	De Mories-Castellet
<i>Ardent</i>	64	G. Keppel		
<i>Centurion</i>	50	R. Braithwaite	74	D'Apchon
			74	La Poype-Vertrieux
<i>Experiment</i>	50	Sir J. Wallace		
<i>Isis</i>	50	J. Raynor	74	De Bougainville
<i>Renown</i>	50	G. Dawson		
<i>Phœnix</i>	44	Hyde Parker	64	Chabert
<i>Roebuck</i>	44	A. Hamond		Cogolin
Five smaller frigates			64	Desmichels
Three fireships				Champorcin
	2		64	De Suffren
		<i>Fantasque</i>	50	D'Alibert de Rions
		<i>Sagittaire</i>		
		Four frigates		

## APPENDIX V

## VICE-ADMIRAL BYRON'S SQUADRON, 1778

<i>Princess Royal</i>	90	Hon. J. Byron, Vice-Admiral of the Blue
		William Blair
<i>Royal Oak</i>	74	Hyde Parker, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		H. Evans
<i>Invincible</i>	74	John Evans, Commodore
		A. Parry

VICE-ADMIRAL BYRON'S SQUADRON, 1778—*continued*.

<i>Bedford</i>	74	Edmund Affleck
<i>Albion</i>	74	G. Bowyer
<i>Conqueror</i>	74	T. Graves
<i>Cornwall</i>	74	T. Edwards
<i>Culloden</i>	74	G. Balfour
<i>Fame</i>	74	S. Colby
<i>Grafton</i>	74	T. Wilkinson
<i>Russel</i>	74	F. S. Drake
<i>Sultan</i>	74	J. Wheelock
<i>Monmouth</i>	64	T. Collingwood

## APPENDIX VI

THE BRITISH AND FRENCH FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF USHANT,  
JULY 27TH, 1778

British			French		
<i>Starboard Division</i>			<i>Vanguard</i>		
<i>Monarch</i>	74	Joshua Rowley	<i>Couronne</i>	80	Du Chaffault, Lieut.-Gén.
<i>Hector</i>	74	Sir J. Hamilton			Huon de Kermadec
<i>Centaur</i>	74	P. Cosby	<i>Duc de Bourgoyne</i>	80	Viscomte de Rochechouart
<i>Exeter</i>	64	J. N. P. Nott			
<i>Duke</i>	90	W. Brereton			
<i>Queen</i>	90	Sir Robert Harland, Vice-Adml. of the Red	<i>Glorieux</i>	74	De Beausset
		I. Prescott	<i>Palmier</i>		De Réals
			<i>Dauphin Royal</i>	70	De Nieuil
			<i>Bien-Aimé</i>	74	D'Aubenton
<i>Shrewsbury</i>	74	Sir John Ross, Bart.	<i>Saint-Michel</i>	60	Mithon de Genouilly
<i>Cumberland</i>	74	J. Peyton	<i>Vengeur</i>	64	D'Ambli- mont
<i>Berwick</i>	74	The Hon. K. Stewart	<i>Alexandre</i>	64	De Trémignon
<i>Stirling Castle</i>	64	Sir Charles Douglas	<i>Amphion</i>	50	De Trobriant
			<i>Indien</i>	64	de La Grandière
<i>Centre Division</i>			<i>Centre</i>		
<i>Courageux</i>	74	Rt. Hon. Lord Mulgrave	<i>Bretagne</i>	110	D'Orvilliers, Lieut.-Gén.
<i>Thunderer</i>	74	Hon. R. B. Walsingham			Du Pavillon, major d'escadre
<i>Sandwich</i>	90	R. Edwards			Duplessis Parscau

British			French		
<i>Centre Division</i>			<i>Centre</i>		
<i>Valiant</i>	74	Hon. J. Leveson Gower	<i>Ville de Paris</i>	100	De Guichen, chef
<i>Bienfaisant</i>	64	J. MacBride			d'escadre
<i>Victory</i>	100	Hon. A. Keppel, Adml. of the Blue	<i>Orient</i>	74	De Peynier
		Rear-Adml. J. Campbell	<i>Fendant</i>	74	D'Hector
		Capt. J. Faulkner	<i>Magnifique</i>	74	De Vaudreuil
<i>Foudroyant</i>	80	John Jervis	<i>Actif</i>	74	De Brach
<i>Prince George</i>	90	Sir. J. Lindsay, K.B.	<i>Artésien</i>	64	D'Orves
<i>Vigilant</i>	64	R. Kingsmill	<i>Réfléchi</i>	64	Des Touches
<i>Terrible</i>	74	Sir R. Bickerton, Bart.			Cillart de Suville
<i>Vengeance</i>	74	M. Clements	<i>Éveillé</i>	64	Du Botderu
			<i>Actionnaire</i>	64	De Proissy
<i>Larboard Division</i>			<i>Rearguard</i>		
<i>Worcester</i>	64	M. Robinson			Duc de Chartres, Lieut.-Général
<i>Elizabeth</i>	74	Hon. F. L. Maitland			De la Motte-Picquet, chef d'esc.
<i>Robust</i>	74	Alexander Hood	<i>Robuste</i>	74	Montperoux-Roquefeuil
<i>Formidable</i>	90	Sir Hugh Paliser, Vice-Admiral of the Blue			Comte de Grasse, chef d'esc.
		Capt. J. Bazely	<i>Conquérant</i>	74	Longueville
<i>Ocean</i>	90	J. Laforey	<i>Intrépide</i>	74	De Monteil
<i>America</i>	64	Lord Longford	<i>Zodiaque</i>	74	Beaussier de Chatauvert
<i>Defiance</i>	64	S. G. Goodall			De La Porte-Vezins
<i>Egmont</i>	74	J. C. Allen	<i>Diadème</i>	74	De La Cardonnie
<i>Ramillies</i>	74	R. Digby	<i>Solitaire</i>	64	De Briqueville
Six frigates			<i>Roland</i>	64	De L'Archan- tel
			<i>Sphinx</i>	64	De Soulanges
			<i>Triton</i>	64	De Ligondès
			<i>Fier</i>	50	Turpin du Breuil

Fifteen frigates

NOTE.—*Duc de Bourgoyne*, and *Alexandre* parted company during the night before the battle. *Saint-Michel*, *Fier*, and *Triton* were of weak scantling and not in the line of battle.



## APPENDIX VII

SIR EDWARD HUGHES'S FLEET THAT SAILED IN MARCH, 1779,  
FOR THE EAST INDIES

<i>Superb</i>	74	Sir Edward Hughes, K.B., Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		R. Simonton
<i>Exeter</i>	64	Richard King
<i>Eagle</i>	64	Amb. Reddall
<i>Burford</i>	64	P. Rainier
<i>Worcester</i>	64	George Talbot
<i>Belleisle</i>	64	J. Brooks
<i>Nymph</i>	14	J. Blanket

## APPENDIX VIII

## THE RIVAL FLEETS IN THE WEST INDIES, 1779

		British
		<i>Van</i>
<i>Suffolk</i>	74	Joshua Rowley, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		H. Christian
<i>Boyne</i>	70	H. Sawyer
<i>Royal Oak</i>	74	T. Fitzherbert
<i>Prince of Wales</i>	74	Hon. Samuel Barrington, Vice-Admiral of the Blue
		B. Hill
<i>Magnificent</i>	74	J. Elphinstone
<i>Trident</i>	64	A. Molloy
<i>Medway</i>	60	W. Affleck
		<i>Centre</i>
<i>Fame</i>	74	T. Barber
<i>Nonsuch</i>	64	W. Griffith
<i>Sultan</i>	74	A. Gardner
<i>Princess Royal</i>	90	Hon. John Byron, Vice-Admiral of the Blue
		W. Blair
<i>Albion</i>	74	G. Bowyer
<i>Stirling Castle</i>	64	R. Carkett
<i>Elizabeth</i>	74	Hon. F. Maitland
		<i>Rear</i>
<i>Yarmouth</i>	64	N. Bateman
<i>Lion</i>	64	Hon. W. Cornwallis
<i>Vigilant</i>	64	Sir Digby Dent

<i>Conqueror</i>	74	Hyde Parker, Rear-Admiral of the Red H. Harmood
<i>Cornwall</i>	74	T. Edwards
<i>Monmouth</i>	64	R. Fanshawe
<i>Grafton</i>	74	T. Collingwood
<i>St. Albans</i>	64	R. Onslow
		French
<i>Languedoc</i>	80	Comte D'Estaing, Vice-Admiral De Croy
<i>Tonnant</i>	80	Comte de Breugnon, chef d'escadre Comte de Bruyeres
<i>César</i>	74	De Broves, chef d'escadre De Raimondis
<i>Zélé</i>	74	Comte Barras de Saint-Laurent
<i>Hector</i>	74	De Moriès Castellet
<i>Protecteur</i>	74	D'Apchon
<i>Marseillais</i>	74	Lapoype de Vertrieux
<i>Guerrier</i>	74	De Bougainville
<i>Vaillant</i>	64	Marquis de Chabert
<i>Provence</i>	64	Desmichels Champerçin
<i>Fantasque</i>	64	De Suffren
<i>Sagittaire</i>	50	D'Albert de Rions
<i>Fier</i>	50	Turpin de Breuil

Which were joined at Martinique before the Battle of Grenada by—

<i>Robuste</i>	74	Comte de Grasse, chef d'escadre Longueville
<i>Magnifique</i>	74	De Brach
<i>Pendant</i>	74	De Vaudreuil
<i>Vengeur</i>	64	De Retz
<i>Sphinx</i>	64	De Soulanges
<i>Annibal</i>	74	La Motte-Picquet, chef d'escadre La Croix
<i>Diadème</i>	74	De Dampierre
<i>Artésien</i>	64	De Peynier
<i>Réfléchi</i>	64	Cillart de Suville
<i>Amphion</i>	50	Ferron du Quengo
<i>Fier-Roderigue</i>	50	De Montault

## APPENDIX IX

## SIR PETER PARKER'S SQUADRON ON THE JAMAICA STATION, 1779

<i>Bristol</i>	50	Sir Peter Parker, Vice-Admiral of the Blue Tobias Caulfield
<i>Ruby</i>	64	Joseph Deane

SIR PETER PARKER'S SQUADRON ON THE JAMAICA STATION, 1779—*cont.*

<i>Lion</i>	64	Hon. W. Cornwallis
<i>Salisbury</i>	50	Charles Inglis
<i>Leviathan</i>	50	J. Brown
<i>Charon</i>	44	Hon. J. Luttrell
<i>Janus</i>	44	Bonovier Glover
<i>La Prudente</i>	36	Hon. W. Waldegrave
<i>Pallas</i>	36	T. Spry
<i>Lowestoft</i>	32	Chr. Parker
<i>Niger</i>	32	R. Lambert
<i>Pomona</i>	28	Charles E. Nugent
<i>Resource</i>	28	Pat. Fotheringham
<i>Hinchinbrook</i>	24	Horatio Nelson
<i>Badger</i>	12	Cuthbert Collingwood
<i>Hound</i>	14	James M'Namara
<i>Porcupine</i>	16	J. Pakenham
<i>Stork</i>	12	Francis L'Montais

## APPENDIX X

## THE GRAND FLEET, 1779

## Van

*Frigates, etc.*

<i>Ambuscade, Crescent, Champion,</i>	<i>Resolution</i>	74	Sir Chaloner Ogle
<i>Hydra, Scarborough</i>	<i>Invincible</i>	74	S. Cornish
<i>Triton</i> —Repeating ship	<i>Alfred</i>	74	W. Bayne
<i>Bonetta</i> —Sloop	<i>Duke</i>	90	Sir Charles Douglas
<i>Infernal</i> } Fireships	<i>Britannia</i>	✓100	George Darby, Vice-Admiral of the Blue
<i>Pluto</i> }			C. M. Pole
<i>Tapageur</i> } Cutters	<i>Union</i>	90	John Dalrymple
<i>Nimble</i> }	<i>Alexander</i>	74	Lord Longford
	<i>Marlborough</i>	74	Taylor Penny
	<i>Intrepid</i>	64	Hon. Henry St. John

## Fifth Division

<i>Pandora</i>	<i>Culloden</i>	74	G. Balfour
<i>Diana</i> —Repeating ship	<i>Buffalo</i>	64	H. Bromedge
	<i>Arrogant</i>	74	J. Cleland
	<i>Defence</i>	74	James Cranston
	<i>Royal George</i>	100	Sir J. Ross Bart., Rear-Admiral of the Blue
			J. L. Colpoys

	<i>Thunderer</i>	74	Hon. R. B. Walsingham
	<i>Monarch</i>	74	Adam Duncan
	<i>Jupiter</i>	50	F. Reynolds
	<i>Bienfaisant</i>	64	J. McBride
	<i>Centre</i>		
<i>Southampton, Milford, Lizard,</i>	<i>Cumberland</i>	74	J. Peyton
<i>Phoenix, Stag, Amazon, Quebec</i>	<i>Courageux</i>	74	Lord Mulgrave
<i>Apollo</i> —Repeating ship	<i>Triumph</i>	74	P. Affleck
<i>Drake</i> —Brig	<i>Formidable</i>	90	J. Stanton
<i>Cormorant</i> —Sloop	<i>Victory</i>	✓100	Sir Chas. Hardy, Admiral of the White
<i>Firebrand</i> } Fireships			R. Kempenfelt
<i>Incendiary</i> }			Henry Collins
<i>Kite</i>			John Jervis
<i>Griffin</i> } Cutters	<i>Foudroyant</i>	80	
<i>Rattlesnake</i> }			
	<i>Princess Amelia</i>	74	G. Walters
	<i>Terrible</i>	74	Sir R. Bickerton, Bart.
	<i>Berwick</i>	74	Hon. K. Stewart
	<i>Edgar</i>	74	J. Elliot
	<i>Fourth Division</i>		
<i>Porcupine</i>	<i>Isis</i>	50	John Raynor
<i>Andromeda</i> —Repeating ship	<i>Shrewsbury</i>	74	M. Robinson
<i>True Briton</i> —Cutter	<i>St. Albans</i>	64	R. Onslow
	<i>Namur</i>	90	C. Fielding
	<i>Prince George</i>	✓90	Hon. Robert Digby, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
			P. Patton
	<i>Valiant</i>	74	S. G. Goodall
	<i>America</i>	64	S. Thompson
	<i>Ramillies</i>	74	J. Moutray
	<i>Centaur</i>	74	J. N. Nott
	<i>Rear</i>		
<i>Brilliant, Medea, Amphitrite, Pegasus</i>	<i>Hector</i>	74	Sir J. Hamilton, Bart.
<i>Camel</i> —Repeating ship	<i>Romney</i>	50	George Johnson
<i>Rambler</i> } Cutters	<i>Canada</i>	74	H. Dalrymple
<i>Flying Fish</i> }	<i>Queen</i>	90	A. Innes
<i>Salamander</i> } Fireships	<i>London</i>	90	Thomas Graves, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
<i>Furnace</i> }			David Graves
<i>Helena</i> —Brig			

THE GRAND FLEET, 1779—*cont.*

<i>Egmont</i>	74	J. Allen
<i>Prudent</i>	64	T. Burnett
<i>Blenheim</i>	90	Broderick Hartwell
<i>Bedford</i>	74	E. Affleck

## APPENDIX XI

## THE FRANCO-SPANISH ARMADA, 1779

		<i>Avant-garde</i>
<i>Citoyen</i>	74	De Nieuil
<i>S. Miguel</i>	70	Don Juan Moreno
<i>Auguste</i>	80	De Rochechouart, chef d'escadre
		De Charitte
<i>Protée</i>	64	Valmenier de Caequeray
<i>S. Pablo</i>	70	De la Villa
<i>Éveillé</i>	64	De Balleroy
<i>Arrogante</i>	70	Don Fidel Estava
<i>Ville de Paris</i>	100	Comte de Guichen, Lieutenant-Général
		Huon de Kermadec
<i>Glorieux</i>	74	De Bausset, chef d'escadre
<i>Serio</i>	70	Don Morales
<i>Indien</i>	64	De La Grandiere
<i>S. Pedro</i>	70	Don Jose Diaz Branes
<i>S. Josey</i>	70	Don Antonio Orserno, chef d'esc.
<i>Palmier</i>	74	De Réals
<i>Victoire</i>	74	D'Albert Saint-Hippolyte

Frigates : *Surveillante, Bellone, Aigrette*Corvettes : *Favorite. Cutter : Pilote*

		<i>Corps de Bataille</i>
<i>Zodiaque</i>	74	De La Porte-Vezins
<i>Guerrero</i>	70	Don Lopez
<i>S. Vincence</i>	76	Comte D'Arce, Lieutenant-Général
<i>Scipion</i>	74	De Cherisey
<i>Bien-Aimé</i>	74	D'Aubenton
<i>Actif</i>	74	De Baraudin
<i>S. Carlos</i>	78	Don Lassana, chef d'escadre
<i>Bretagne</i>	110	Comte d'Orvilliers, Lieutenant-Général
		Duplessis-Parseau
<i>Neptune</i>	74	Comte D'Hector, chef d'escadre
<i>Vincedor</i>	70	Don Ramirez
<i>Destin</i>	74	D'Espinouse
<i>S. Joaquim</i>	70	Don Carlos de Torres

<i>S. Isabel</i>	70	Don Antonio Posada, chef d'escadre
<i>Bourgogne</i>	74	De Marin
<i>Solitaire</i>	64	De Montclerc

Frigates : *Assumpcion, Atalante, Junon, Concorde*

Corvettes : *Grana, Curieuse, Étourdie*

Luggers : *Chasseur, Espiègle*

*Arrière-garde*

<i>Hercule</i>	74	Comte d'Amblimont
<i>Septentrion</i>	64	Don Fumes
<i>Saint-Esprit</i>	82	De Ternay d'Arzac, chef d'escadre
		De Médines
<i>Intrépide</i>	74	Beaussier de Chatauvvert
<i>S. Angel</i>	70	Don Ruis Gordon
<i>Bizarre</i>	64	De Saint-Riveul
<i>Conquérant</i>	74	De Monteil
<i>Rayo</i>	80	Don Miguel, Gaston Lieutenant-Général
		Don Giral
<i>S. Damas</i>	70	Don Francisco Borja
<i>Actionnaire</i>	64	De L'Archantel
<i>Alexandre</i>	64	De Trémigon
<i>Brillante</i>	70	Don Carazo
<i>S. Luis</i>	80	Don Solano, chef d'escadre
<i>Caton</i>	64	De Seillans
<i>Pluton</i>	74	Des Touches

Frigates : *Diane, N<sup>a</sup> Sen<sup>a</sup> del Carmel, Magicienne*

Corvettes : *Senegal, Sta. Catharina*

Cutter : *Mutin*

*Escadre Légère*

<i>Saint-Michel</i>	60	De Labiochaye
<i>Espana</i>	60	Don Avaoz
<i>Couronne</i>	80	Levassor de Latouche, Lieutenant-Général
		Du Breil de Rays
<i>Mino</i>	52	Don Jose Zalava
<i>Triton</i>	64	Chadeau de Lacrocheterie

*Escadre d'observation*

<i>S. Trinidad</i>	110	Don Luis Cordova, Lieutenant-Général
<i>S. Nicolas</i>	80	Don Ventura Moreno
<i>Monarca</i>	70	Don Adrian Cantin, chef d'escadre
<i>S. Isidro</i>	70	Don Lopez
<i>S. Pascal</i>	70	Don Ponce de Leon, chef d'escadre
<i>S. Rafael</i>	70	Don Posligo
<i>S. Eugenio</i>	70	Don Domonte
<i>Princesa</i>	70	Don Leon
<i>Atlante</i>	70	Don Diego Quevedo

THE FRANCO-SPANISH ARMADA, 1779—*cont.*

<i>S. Francisco de Asis</i>	70	Don Josef Domas
<i>Velasco</i>	70	Don Diego Munoz
<i>Galicia</i>	70	Don Alberto
<i>Oriente</i>	70	Don Perser
<i>S. Francisco de Paula</i>	70	Don Alonzo Rivas
<i>S. Isidoro</i>	70	Don Salafranca
<i>Astuto</i>	70	Don Vallecilla
Frigates : <i>Gertruda, S. Rosina</i>		

## APPENDIX XII

## COMMODORE WALSINGHAM'S REINFORCEMENT TO WEST INDIES

<i>Thunderer</i>	74	Hon. R. B. Walsingham, Commodore
		B. Nicholas
<i>Berwick</i>	74	Hon. K. Stewart
<i>Egmont</i>	74	B. Fanshaw
<i>Shrewsbury</i>	74	M. Robinson
<i>Centaur</i>	74	J. N. P. Nott
One frigate, one corvette		

## APPENDIX XIII

## SIR SAMUEL HOOD'S REINFORCEMENT TO WEST INDIES

<i>Barfleur</i>	90	Sir Samuel Hood, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		J. Inglefield
<i>Gibraltar</i>	80	Walter Stirling
<i>Invincible</i>	74	C. Saxton
<i>Princessa</i>	70	Sir T. Rich
<i>Monarca</i>	70	J. Gell
<i>Prince William</i>	64	Stair Douglas
<i>Belliqueux</i>	64	T. Fitzherbert
<i>Panther</i>	60	J. Harvey
Four frigates		

## APPENDIX XIV

## CHEVALIER DE TERNAY'S SQUADRON AT RHODE ISLAND, 1780

<i>Duc de Bourgoyne</i>	80	De Ternay d'Arzac, chef d'escadre
		De Médine
<i>Neptune</i>	74	Des Touches
<i>Conquérant</i>	74	De La Grandière
<i>Éveillè</i>	64	Le Gardeur de Tilly

<i>Provence</i>	64	De Lombard
<i>Jason</i>	64	De La Clocheterie
<i>Ardent</i>	64	Bernard de Marigny
<i>Fantásque</i>	en flûte	De Vaudoré
Two frigates, one corvette		

## APPENDIX XV

## THE RIVAL FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF MARTINIQUE, APRIL 17, 1780

## British Line of Battle

## Van

<i>Stirling Castle</i>	64	Robert Carkett
<i>Ajaz</i>	74	S. Uvedale
<i>Elizabeth</i>	74	Hon. F. Maitland
<i>Princess Royal</i>	90	Hyde Parker, Rear-Admiral of the Red
		H. Harwood
<i>Albion</i>	74	George Bowyer
<i>Terrible</i>	74	John Douglas
<i>Trident</i>	64	A. J. P. Molloy
Frigate : <i>Greyhound</i> —Repeating ship		

## Centre

<i>Grafton</i>	74	Thomas Collingwood, Commodore
		T. Newnham
<i>Yarmouth</i>	64	N. Bateman
<i>Cornwall</i>	74	Tim. Edwards
<i>Sandwich</i>	90	Sir G. B. Rodney, Admiral of the White
		Walter Young
<i>Suffolk</i>	74	H. Christian
<i>Boyne</i>	70	Charles Cotton
<i>Vigilant</i>	64	Sir George Hume, Bart.

Repeating ship : *Venus*Frigates : *Pegasus*, *Deal Castle*

## Rear

<i>Vengeance</i>	74	W. Hotham, Commodore
		J. Holloway
<i>Medway</i>	60	William Affleck
<i>Montagu</i>	74	J. Houlton
<i>Conqueror</i>	74	Joshua Rowley, Rear-Admiral of the Red
		Thomas Watson
<i>Intrepid</i>	64	Hon. Henry St. John
<i>Magnificent</i>	74	John Elphinstone
* <i>Centurion</i>	50	R. Braithwaite

Frigate : *Andromeda*—Repeating ship

\* To assist the Rear in case of need.



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THE RIVAL FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF MARTINIQUE, APRIL 17, 1780—*cont.*

## French Line of Battle

### Van

<i>Destin</i>	74	Du Maitz de Goimpy Feuquières
<i>Vengeur</i>	64	De Retz
<i>Saint-Michel</i>	60	D'Aymar
<i>Pluton</i>	74	De La Martonie
<i>Triomphant</i>	80	Comte de Sade, chef d'escadre
		De Gras-Préville
<i>Souverain</i>	74	De Glandevis
<i>Solitaire</i>	64	De Cicé-Champion

### Centre

<i>Citoyen</i>	74	De Nieuil
<i>Caton</i>	64	De Framond
<i>Victoire</i>	74	D'Albert Saint-Hippolyte
<i>Fendant</i>	74	De Vaudreuil, chef d'escadre
<i>Couronne</i>	80	Comte de Guichen, Lieut.-Général
		Buor de la Charoulière
<i>Palmier</i>	74	De Monteil, chef d'escadre
<i>Indien</i>	64	De Balleroy
<i>Actionnaire</i>	64	De Larchantel

### Rear

<i>Intrépide</i>	74	Duplessis-Parscau
<i>Triton</i>	64	Brun de Boades
<i>Magnifique</i>	74	De Brach
<i>Robuste</i>	64	Comte de Grasse, chef d'escadre
<i>Sphinx</i>	64	De Soulanges
<i>Artésien</i>	74	De Peynier
<i>Hercule</i>	74	D'Amblimont

Frigates: *Résolue, Iphigénie, Courageuse, Médée, Gentille*

*Dauphin Royal*, 70 (Mithon de Genouilly), joined after the action on the 17th.

## APPENDIX XVI

### DON JOSEF SOLANO'S SQUADRON

<i>S. Luis</i>	80	Don J. Solano, chef d'escadre
		J. Comino
<i>Arrogante</i>	70	Don Felipe Carizosa
<i>S. Augustine</i>	70	Don J. S. Salvaria, Brigadier
<i>S. Francisca de Paula</i>	70	Don Domingo Grandellana

<i>Gallardo</i>	70	Don G. Zavala
<i>Astuto</i>	64	Don Estanislao Velasco
<i>S. Nicholas</i>	80	Don J. Tamesa, chef d'escadre
		Don F. Movales
<i>S. Francisco de Asis</i>	70	Don J. Domas
<i>S. Jenaro</i>	70	Don Felix Tesada
<i>Velasco</i>	70	Don St. Iago de Velasco
<i>Guerrero</i>	70	Don Fidel de Essaba
<i>Dragon</i>	64	Don Pedro Autran
		Three frigates
		Eighty-three transports

## APPENDIX XVII

## SIR G. B. RODNEY'S FLEET FOR THE RELIEF OF GIBRALTAR, 1780

<i>Sandwich</i>	90	Sir G. B. Rodney, Admiral of the White
		W. Young
<i>Prince George</i>	98	R. Digby, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		P. Patton
<i>Royal George</i>	100	Sir J. L. Ross, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		J. Bourmaster
<i>Aloide</i>	74	J. Brisbane
<i>Ajaz</i>	74	S. Uvedale
<i>Bedford</i>	74	E. Affleck
<i>Culloden</i>	74	G. Balfour
<i>Cumberland</i>	74	J. Peyton
<i>Edgar</i>	74	J. Elliot
<i>Montagu</i>	74	J. Houlton
<i>Monarch</i>	74	A. Duncan
<i>Shrewsbury</i>	74	M. Robinson
<i>Terrible</i>	74	J. Douglas
<i>Resolution</i>	74	Sir Chaloner Ogle
<i>Hector</i>	74	Sir John Hamilton
<i>Invincible</i>	74	S. Cornish
<i>Defence</i>	74	James Cranston
<i>Marlborough</i>	74	T. Penny
<i>Dublin</i>	74	S. Wallis
<i>America</i>	64	S. Thompson
<i>Bienfaisant</i>	64	J. M'Bride
		Nine frigates

NOTE.—*Hector* and three frigates detached with the trade for West Indies before the action with Caracoe fleet.

## APPENDIX XVIII

## THE CARACCA FLEET TAKEN BY SIR G. B. RODNEY, JANUARY 7, 1780

<i>Guipuscoana</i>	64	Don Juan Augustin de Yardi, Commodore
<i>S. Carlos</i>	32	
<i>S. Rafael</i>	30	
<i>S. Teresa</i>	28	
<i>S. Bruno</i>	26	
<i>S. Vincente</i>	10	
<i>S. Firmin</i>	16	

and fifteen ships laden with wheat and naval stores

## APPENDIX XIX

## DON JUAN LANGARA'S FLEET, JANUARY 16th, 1780

<i>Phoenix</i>	80	Don Juan de Langara } Admiral } Taken
		Don Fran. Melgareso }
<i>S. Augustin</i>	70	Don Vincente Dos } Escaped
<i>S. Jenaro</i>	70	Don Felix Tesada }
<i>S. Justo</i>	70	Don Josef } Escaped much
<i>S. Lorenzo</i>	70	Don Juan de Araoz } damaged
		{ Taken, but drove ashore and retaken by the Spaniards
<i>S. Julian</i>	70	Marquis de Medina
<i>S. Eugenio</i>	70	Don Antonio Damonte
<i>S. Domingo</i>	70	Don Ignatio Mendezabel } Blew up
<i>Monarca</i>	70	Don Antonio Oyarvide }
<i>Princesa</i>	70	Don Manuel de Leon } Taken
<i>Diligente</i>	70	Don Antonio Abornoz }
<i>S. Gertrudie</i>	26	Don Anibal Caffoni } Escaped
<i>S. Rosalia</i>	28	Don Antonio Ortogi }

## APPENDIX XX

## THE RIVAL FLEETS ON APRIL 29TH, 1781

British			French		
<i>Rear-Admiral Sir S. Hood's Division</i>			<i>Ville de Paris</i>	110	Comte de
<i>Alfred</i>	74	W. Bayne			Grasse,
<i>Belliqueux</i>	64	J. A. Brine			Lieut.-
<i>Alcide</i>	64	C. Thomson			Général
<i>Invincible</i>	74	R. Bickerton			De Sainte-
<i>Monarch</i>	74	F. Reynolds			Cézaire
<i>Barfleur</i>	90	Sir S. Hood,			De Vaugirauld
		Rear Ad-			Major d'es-
		miral of the			cadre
		Blue			
		J. Knight			

British			French		
<i>Terrible</i>	74	J. Ferguson	<i>Auguste</i>	80	De Bougainville, chef d'escadre
<i>Princessa</i>	70	Sir T. Rich			De Castillan
<i>Ajax</i>	74	J. Symons			Chabert
<i>Rear-Admiral F. S. Drake's Division</i>			<i>Saint Esprit</i>	80	Cogolin
<i>Resolution</i>	74	Lord Robert Manners	<i>Languedoc</i>	80	Baron d'Arros d'Argelos
<i>Montagu</i>	74	J. Houlton	<i>Sceptre</i>	74	Comte de Vaudreuil
<i>Gibraltar</i>	80	F. S. Drake, Rear Admiral of the Blue	<i>César</i>	74	Coriolis d'Espinoise
<i>Centaur</i>	74	C. Knatchbull	<i>Souverain</i>	74	De Glandevez
<i>Russell</i>	74	J. N. P. Nott	<i>Northumberland</i>	74	De Briquerville
<i>Prince William</i>	64	A. Sutherland			D'Albert de Rions
<i>Torbay</i>	74	Stair Douglas	<i>Pluton</i>	74	De Montecler
<i>Intrepid</i>	64	J. L. Gidoin	<i>Diadème</i>	74	Comte Le Bègue
<i>Shrewsbury</i>	74	A. J. Molloy	<i>Magnanime</i>	74	De Gras-Préville
		M. Robinson	<i>Zélé</i>	74	De Castellane-Majastres
			<i>Marseillais</i>	74	De Charitte
			<i>Bourgoyne</i>	74	De Chaval
			<i>Scipion</i>	74	Renaud d'Aleins
			<i>Hector</i>	74	Turpin de Breuil
			<i>Hercule</i>	74	Viscomte d'Escars
			<i>Glorieux</i>	74	Comte d'Éthy
			<i>Citoyen</i>	74	Bernard de Marigny
			<i>Vaillant</i>	64	
<i>In Fort Royal Bay</i>					
			<i>Victoire</i>	74	D'Albert St. Hippolyte
			<i>Caton</i>	64	De Framond
			<i>Solitaire</i>	64	De Cicé-Champion
			<i>Réfléchi</i>	64	Cillart de Suville

## APPENDIX XXI

## THE RIVAL FLEETS IN THE BATTLE OF CAPE HENRY, MARCH 16TH, 1781

		British
<i>America</i>	64	S. Thomson
<i>Bedford</i>	74	E. Affleck
<i>Adamant</i>	50	Gideon Johnstone
<i>London</i>	98	Thomas Graves, Rear-Admiral of the Red
		David Graves
<i>Royal Oak</i>	74	M. Arbuthnot, Vice-Admiral of the White
		W. Swiney
<i>Prudent</i>	64	T. Burnet
<i>Europe</i>	64	Smith Child
<i>Robust</i>	74	P. Cosby
		Four frigates
		French
<i>Neptune</i>	74	De Médine
<i>Duc-de-Bourgoyne</i>	80	Des Touches, chef d'escadre
		Baron de Durfort
<i>Conquérant</i>	74	De La Grandiere
<i>Provence</i>	64	Lombard
<i>Ardent</i>	64	Bernard de Marigny
<i>Jason</i>	64	Chadeau de La Clocheterie
<i>Éveillé</i>	64	De Tilly
<i>Romulus</i>	44	De Villebrune
<i>Fantastique</i>	<i>en flûte</i>	De Vaudoré
		Two frigates

## APPENDIX XXII

THE RIVAL FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF THE CHESAPEAKE,  
SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1781

British			French		
	<i>Van</i>			<i>Avant-garde</i>	
<i>Alfred</i>	74	W. Bayne	<i>Pluton</i>	74	D'Albert de Rions
<i>Belliqueux</i>	64	J. Brine			
<i>Invincible</i>	74	C. Saxton	<i>Marseillais</i>	74	De Castellane de Majastre
<i>Barfleur</i>	90	Sir S. Hood, Rear-Adml. of the Blue	<i>Bourgogne</i>	74	De Charitte
		Alex. Hood	<i>Réfléchi</i>	74	Cillart de Suville
<i>Monarch</i>	74	F. Reynolds	<i>Auguste</i>	80	De Bougainville, chef d'escadre
<i>Centaur</i>	74	J. Inglefield			Castellan

British			French		
<i>Centre</i>			<i>Diadème</i>	74	De Montecleros
<i>America</i>	64	S. Thompson	<i>Saint-Esprit</i>	80	De Chabert
<i>Resolution</i>	74	Lord Robert Manners	<i>Caton</i>	74	De Framond
<i>Corps de bataille</i>					
<i>Bedford</i>	74	T. Graves	<i>César</i>	74	Coriolis d'Es- pinouse
<i>London</i>	98	Thomas Graves, Rear-Adml. of the Red	<i>Destin</i>	74	Dumaitz de Goimpy
		D. Graves	<i>Ville de Paris</i>	104	De Grasse, Lieut.-Gén.
<i>Royal Oak</i>	74	J. P. Ardesoise			De Sainte- Césaire
<i>Montagu</i>	74	G. Bowen			De Vaugirault major d'es- cadre
<i>Europe</i>	64	S. Child			
<i>Rear</i>					
<i>Terrible</i>	74	Hon. W. C. Finch	<i>Victoire</i>	74	D'Albert Saint- Hippolyte
<i>Ajax</i>	74	N. Charring- ton	<i>Sceptre</i>	80	De Vaudreuil
<i>Princessa</i>	70	F. S. Drake, Rear-Adml. of the Blue	<i>Northumberland</i>	74	De Brique- ville
		C. Knatchbull	<i>Palmier</i>	74	Baron D'Arros d'Argelos
<i>Alcide</i>	74	C. Thompson			De Cicé Champion
<i>Intrepid</i>	64	A. J. P. Mol- loy	<i>Solitaire</i>	64	
<i>Shrewsbury</i>	74	M. Robinson			
Seven frigates			<i>Arrière-garde</i>		
			<i>Citoyon</i>	74	Comte D'Éthy
			<i>Scipion</i>	74	De Clavel
			<i>Magnanime</i>	74	Le Bègue
			<i>Hercule</i>	74	Turpin de Breuil
			<i>Languedoc</i>	80	De Monteil, chef d'escadre Duplessis Parscau
			<i>Zélé</i>	74	De Gras- Préville
			<i>Hector</i>	74	Renaud d'Aleins
			<i>Souverain</i>	74	De Glandevès

## APPENDIX XXIII

THE RIVAL FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF THE DOGGER BANK,  
AUGUST 5TH, 1781

		British
<i>Fortitude</i>	74	Hyde Parker, Vice-Admiral of the Red
		G. Robertson
<i>Princess Amelia</i>	80	J. Macartney
<i>Berwick</i>	74	J. Ferguson
<i>Bienfaisant</i>	64	R. Braithwaite
<i>Buffalo</i>	60	W. Truscott
<i>Preston</i>	50	A. Graeme
<i>Dolphin</i>	44	William Blair
		Dutch
<i>Erfprins</i>	54	A. Braak
<i>Admiral General</i>	74	Van Kingsbergen
<i>Argo</i>	44	A. C. Staering
<i>Batave</i>	54	W. J. Bentinck
<i>Admiral de Ruyter</i>	68	J. A. Zoutman, Rear-Admiral
<i>Admiral Piet Hein</i>	54	W. Van Braam
<i>Holland</i>	68	S. Dedel
<i>Mendinblinck</i>	44	D. Van Rynerald

## APPENDIX XXIV

THE RIVAL FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF THE SAINTS,  
APRIL 12TH, 1782

		British	
<i>Frigates</i>		<i>Van</i>	
<i>Lizard</i>	<i>Royal Oak</i>	74	T. Burnett
<i>Nymphe</i>	<i>Alfred</i>	74	W. Bayne
<i>Champion</i>	<i>Montagu</i>	74	G. Bowen
<i>Zebra</i>	<i>Yarmouth</i>	64	A. Parrey
	<i>Valiant</i>	74	G. S. Goodall
	<i>Barfleur</i>	90	Sir Samuel Hood, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
			J. Knight
	<i>Monarch</i>	74	F. Reynolds
	<i>Warrior</i>	74	Sir J. Wallace
	<i>Belliqueux</i>	64	A. Sutherland
	<i>Centaure</i>	74	J. Inglefield
	<i>Magnificent</i>	74	R. Linzee
	<i>Prince William</i>	64	G. Wilkinson

		<i>Centre</i>	
<i>Flora</i>	<i>Bedford</i>	74	Ed. Affleck, Commodore
			T. Graves
<i>Alert</i>	<i>Ajaz</i>	74	N. Charrington
<i>Sybil</i>	<i>Repulse</i>	64	T. Dumaresq
<i>Andromache</i>	<i>Canada</i>	74	Hon. W. Cornwallis
<i>Endymion</i>	<i>St. Albans</i>	64	C. Inglis
	<i>Namur</i>	90	R. Fanshawe
	<i>Formidable</i>	90	Sir G. B. Rodney, Admiral of the White
			Sir C. Douglas
			J. Symons
	<i>Duke</i>	90	Alan Gardner
	<i>Agamemnon</i>	64	B. Caldwell
	<i>Resolution</i>	74	Lord Robert Manners
	<i>Prothée</i>	64	C. Buckner
	<i>Hercules</i>	74	H. Savage
	<i>America</i>	64	S. Thomson
		<i>Rear</i>	
<i>Triton</i>	<i>Russell</i>	74	James Saumarez
<i>Eurydice</i>	<i>Prudent</i>	64	A. Barkley
	<i>Fame</i>	74	R. Barbor
	<i>Anson</i>	64	W. Blair
	<i>Torbay</i>	74	J. L. Gidoin
	<i>Prince George</i>	90	J. Williams
	<i>Princessa</i>	50	F. S. Drake, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
			C. Knatchbull
	<i>Conqueror</i>	74	G. Balfour
	<i>Nonsuch</i>	64	W. Truscott
	<i>Alcide</i>	74	C. Thomson
	<i>Arrogant</i>	74	S. Cornish
	<i>Marlborough</i>	74	T. Penny
<i>French</i>			
<i>Troisième escadre ou escadre bleue</i>			
	<i>Hercule</i>	74	Chadeau de la Clocheterie
	<i>Souverain</i>	74	De Glandevez
	<i>Palmier</i>	74	De Martelly-Chautard
	<i>Northumberland</i>	74	De Sainte-Césaire
	<i>Neptune</i>	74	Renaud d'Aleins
	<i>Auguste</i>	80	De Bougainville, chef d'es- cadre
			De Castellan
	<i>Ardent</i>	64	De Gouzillon
	<i>Scipion</i>	74	De Chavel
	<i>Brave</i>	74	D'Amblimont
	<i>Citoyen</i>	74	D'Éthy



THE RIVAL FLEETS AT THE BATTLE OF THE SAINTS,  
APRIL 12TH 1782—*cont.*

## French

*Première escadre ou escadre blanche*

<i>Hector</i>	74	De la Vicomté
<i>César</i>	74	De Marigny
<i>Dauphin-Royal</i>	70	De Roquefeuil-Montpérourx
<i>Languedoc</i>	80	D'Arras d'Argelos
<i>Ville de Paris</i>	104	Comte de Grasse, Lieut.- Général
		De Lavilléon
		De Vaugiraud, Major d'escadre
<i>Couronne</i>	80	Mithon de Genouilly
<i>Événille</i>	64	Le Gardeur de Tilly
<i>Sceptre</i>	74	De Vaudreuil
<i>Glorieux</i>	74	D'Escars
<i>Deuxième escadre ou escadre blanche et bleue</i>		
<i>Diadème</i>	74	De Monteclerc
<i>Destin</i>	74	Dumaitz de Goimpy
<i>Magnanime</i>	74	Le Bégue
<i>Réfléchi</i>	64	De Médine
<i>Conquérant</i>	74	De La Grandière
<i>Magnifique</i>	74	Macarthy Mactaigne
<i>Triomphant</i>	80	De Vaudreuil, chef d'escadre Du Pavillon
<i>Bourgogne</i>	74	De Charitte
<i>Duc-de-Bourgogne</i>	80	Coriolis d'Espinouse, chef d'escadre
		De Champmartin
<i>Marseillais</i>	74	De Castellane Majastre
<i>Pluton</i>	74	D'Albert de Rions

## APPENDIX XXV

## LORD HOWE'S FLEET FOR THE RELIEF OF GIBRALTAR, 1782

		British
<i>Royal William</i>	84	J. C. Allen
<i>Goliath</i>	74	Sir H. Parker
<i>Foundroyant</i>	80	Sir J. Jervis
<i>Britannia</i>	100	Hon. Samuel Barrington, Vice-Admiral of the White
		John Hill
<i>Atlas</i>	90	G. Vandeput

<i>Ruby</i>	64	H. Collins
<i>Panther</i>	60	R. Simonton
<i>Edgar</i>	74	W. Hotham, Commodore
		W. Cayley
<i>Polypheumus</i>	64	Hon. W. C. Finch
<i>Suffolk</i>	74	Sir George Home
<i>Vigilant</i>	64	John Douglas
<i>Courageuz</i>	74	Lord Mulgrave
<i>Crown</i>	64	Samuel Reeves
<i>Alexander</i>	74	Lord Longford
<i>Sampson</i>	64	John Harvey
<i>Princess Royal</i>	90	J. Faulknor
<i>Victory</i>	100	Viscount Howe, Admiral of the Blue
		J. L. Gower
		Henry Duncan
<i>Blenheim</i>	90	Adam Duncan
<i>Asia</i>	64	B. R. Bligh
<i>Egmont</i>	74	J. Ferguson
<i>Queen</i>	90	Alexander Hood, Rear-Admiral of the White
		William Domet
<i>Bellona</i>	74	R. Onslow
<i>Ganges</i>	74	C. Fielding
<i>Raisable</i>	64	Lord Hervey
<i>Fortitude</i>	74	George Keppel
<i>Princess Amelia</i>	80	Sir Richard Hughes, Rear-Admiral of the Blue
		John Reynolds
<i>Berwick</i>	74	Hon. C. Phipps
<i>Bienfaisant</i>	64	John Howorth
<i>Dublin</i>	74	A. Dickson
<i>Cambridge</i>	80	K. Stewart
<i>Ocean</i>	90	Mark Milbanke, Vice-Admiral of the Blue
		R. Rogers
<i>Union</i>	90	J. Dalrymple
<i>Buffalo</i>	60	J. Holloway
<i>Vengeance</i>	74	J. Moutray
<i>Bristol</i>	50	J. Burney
		Eight frigates

## APPENDIX XXVI

## THE RIVAL FLEETS IN THE EAST INDIES, 1782 AND 1783

*At the Battle of Sadras February 17, 1782*

	British		French
<i>Eagle</i>	64	<i>Sévère</i>	64
<i>Monmouth</i>	64	<i>Vengeur</i>	64
<i>Worcester</i>	64	<i>Brillant</i>	64

THE RIVAL FLEETS IN THE EAST INDIES, 1782 AND 1783—*cont.*

British		French	
<i>Burford</i>	64	<i>Flamand</i>	60
<i>Superb</i>	74	<i>Annitsal</i>	74
	Flew flag of Sir Edward Hughes, Vice-Admiral of the Blue in all five battles	<i>Héros</i>	74
			Flew the flag of chef d'escadre De Suffren in the first four battles
<i>Hero</i>	74	<i>Orient</i>	74
<i>Isis</i>	50	<i>Artésien</i>	64
<i>Monarca</i>	68	<i>Sphinx</i>	64
<i>Exeter</i>	64	<i>Ajax</i>	64
		<i>Hannibal</i>	50
		<i>Bizarre</i>	64

*At the Battle of Providien, April 12, 1782*

Add *Sultan* 74  
*Magnanime* 64

The same

*At the Battle of Negapatam, July 6, 1782*

The same

*Ajax* not present

*At the Battle of Trincomalee, September 3, 1782*

Add *Sceptre* 64

Add *Saint-Michel* 60  
*Illustre* 74  
*Consolante* 36  
*Ajax* rejoined

*At the Battle of Cuddalore, June 20, 1783*

Add *Cumberland* 74  
*Bristol* 50  
*Africa* 64  
*Inflexible* 64  
*Gibraltar* 80  
*Defence* 74

Add *Fendant* 74  
*Argonaute* 74  
*Hardi* 64  
*Consolante* not present  
*Orient* wrecked  
*Bizarre* wrecked

NOTE.—Names of commanding officers are omitted on account of the frequent changes that took place in both fleets during the campaign.

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